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Time and the Experience of Narrative in Italian Renaissance Art

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Time and the Experience of Narrative in Italian Renaissance Art

by

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Dissertation

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D**edication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Ted and Bobbie, and to my sister, Krissy. Regardless of how far away from home my interests and studies have taken me over the years, they have always stood by me and supported me.

Secondly, I dedicate this work to Maria Huber, my high school Spanish, Italian and Humanities teacher, who opened a door of discovery that changed my life's trajectory and brought me to where I am today. She has always been, and continues to be, an inspiration.

Finally, I dedicate this to my nephews, Hayden and Karson, along with some words of wisdom from Giovanni Pico della Mirandola:

> *Ci invada l'animo una certa sacra ambizione così che non contenti delle cose mediocri aneliamo a quelle elevate, ci sforziamo di conseguirle con tutte le forze (allorché possiamo se lo vogliamo).* -Oratio de hominis dignitate, 1486
>
> Let a holy ambition pervade our soul, so that, not satisfied with mediocre things, we strive for the loftiest and apply ourselves with all our strength to pursue them (because we can achieve them, if we want.) -*Oration on the dignity of man*, 1486

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The idea for this dissertation grew out of two different papers I wrote for graduate courses at UT Austin: one on Dante's use of art in the *Divine Comedy*, the other on Leonardo's *Last Supper* (much of which became Chapter Four of this dissertation). My studies and interests have always been rooted in the early modern period: not only the art, but the history and literature as well. Thanks to the Italian Studies program at the University of Texas at Austin I was able to pursue both my interests: art history and literature. I feel additionally blessed to have been the part of the inaugural class of the Italian Studies doctoral program at UT Austin, which exists due to the passion and persistence of Daniela Bini. I have had the privilege to see this program grow and prosper.

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Time and the Experience of Narrative in Italian Renaissance Art

by

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SUPERVISOR: Louis Waldman

Abstract

For many centuries, painting and sculpture translated the written narratives into images for a host of audiences. Unlike the narratives expressed in literature, music, theater, and film, which develop over time, the static nature of painting and sculpture give them the appearance of being temporally frozen. As such, we tend to think of them as having the ability to evoke only a single moment of a given narrative. Such limitations were the product of scholarly debates of the eighteenth-century that argued that the pictorial arts should portray only a single and precise *punctum temporis* of any given story. Artists and art theorists of the Renaissance do not appear to have placed such stringent restrictions on visual narratives. Quite the contrary, among the art of the Italian Quattrocento and Cinquecento, one can find a variety of temporal expressions: from the split-second precision of a fixed instant, to the sequenced actions of continuous narratives, to the abridgement of collapsed narrative. Through close readings of both paintings and sculptures in relation to their source texts, this dissertation explores how narrative artwork

suggested duration and the continuity of a storyline. It considers how some artists may have, wittingly or unwittingly, succeeded in lengthening the intrinsic timelines of their visual narratives through polynarrative approaches: for example, by juxtaposing multiple moments of a single narrative or by combining multiple narratives in a visually seamless manner that does not patently jeopardize the unities of space and time. This dissertation explores not only the polynarrative aspects of some works, it also investigates the importance of the role of the viewer and how the spectator's process of reading and interaction with the image affects how the experience of narrative unfolds before them. The study presents a method of reading art that aims to serve as a critical model for future inquiries regarding the temporal natures of figurative narratives.

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Since all human actions unfold in time and are carried out in space,
men, time and space are the three major challenges which
the task of story telling presents to a sculptor or painter.
George M.A. Hanfmann[1]

Introduction

In his 2010 documentary "The Cave of Forgotten Dreams," Werner Herzog suggests how even 32,000 years ago, Paleolithic artists may have attempted to capture the idea of movement in their cave drawings of large mammals.[2] Recreating the flickering effect of the light from fires and torches, in his film, Herzog notes,

> For these Paleolithic painters the play of light and shadow from their torches could possibly have looked like this…. For them, perhaps the animals appeared moving, living. We should note that the artist depicted this bison with eight legs suggesting movement, almost a form of proto-cinema. The walls themselves are not flat but have their own three-dimensional dynamic, their own movement, which was utilized by the artists. In the upper left corner another multi-legged animal and the rhino to the right seems also to have the illusion of movement, like frames in an animated film.[3]

The bison, with its eight legs, seems to mimic the act of running, while the rhinoceros, whose horn and shoulders are multiplied with visual echoes that radiate above and below, indicates perhaps an up and down movement of its head (Figure 1). Such repetition in depicted motion is not so different from Italian futurist Giacomo Balla's 1912 piece, *Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio* (Figure 2), in which the viewer delights in the rapid blur of the legs and wagging tail of the little Dachshund, the quick pace of his master and

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[1] *George M. A. Hanfmann,* "*Narration in Greek Art*," *American Journal of Archaeology* (61:1957), 71-78.
[2] *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams,* Dir. Werner Herzog, Dist. Sundance Selects, 2010. The link provided below is a clip of the movie in which Herzog discusses how the drawings may have represented movement, especially when coupled with the flickering light of torches and fires: *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*; Movement: http://www.imdb.com/video/imdb/vi2827853081/
[3] The quote is a transcription the clip: *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams*; Movement (listed in the note above).

the swinging chain leash. It is a trick known to all cartoonists: a convenient visual ploy to replicate the sense of implied movement, through a sequence of "stop-action" captures. Along with movement, these images also represent, by default, at least a modicum of duration. Consider Balla's contemporary Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* (Figure 3) also painted in 1912. Despite its more abstract appearance, Duchamp has included a greater sense of forward momentum to mimic the sequence of action as occurring over a span of time.

Neither the cave drawings at Chauvet, Balla's dog, nor Duchamp's nude descending the stairs, are formally what we would call narrative works of art. They are not tied to any specific literary, historical or mythological event or text, yet each of these images arguably exhibits, as John Shearman called it, "a non-text-based *narrative*" [italics in original].[4] Their subjects are in the act of doing something, and this act of doing inherently confers notions of both anteriority and posteriority, or continuation. Whether it is charging across the plains, merrily trotting down the sidewalk, or sensually slinking down the staircase, these images provide the viewer with a sense of the progress in the actions depicted, despite the static art form. This is all well enough for exhibiting the motions of objects and beings, but what about narrative images? How do you infuse a notion of narrative progression into a static image?

In the late nineteenth-century, Franz Wickoff identified three compositional styles by which a painting tells a story: "the isolating method" (monoscenic, one scene at a

[4] John Shearman, "Donatello, the Spectator and the Shared Moment," in *The Enduring Instant: Time and the Spectator in the Visual Arts,* Eds. A. Roesler-Friedenthal, J. Nathan (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2003), 53-79.

time), "the continuous method" (where several episodes are recounted in a single frame through repetition of the figures, and finally, by "the complementary method," which Wickoff claims, "aims at the complete expression of everything that happens before or after the central event, or that concerns the subject matter." [5]

By "complementary" Wickoff intends an image which is polyscenic but unlike the continuous method does not resort to repetition of the *dramatis personae*. He traces the complementary method back to Ancient Egypt and Asia, citing it as the oldest mode of narrative depiction, and claims that it is the basis for all historical painting. His example of complementary narrative is the story of the death of Troilus depicted on the François vase (6th c. BCE) in the Archeological museum of Florence. Within a narrow and unbroken frieze-like frame, the central scene (Achilles ambushing Troilus) is placed at the center while figures and symbols relating to events occurring before and after the ambush are placed in a linear fashion, respectively to the left and right of the central event. The various elements are visually unconnected but they represent the various pieces of the story. Wickoff's examples of complementary method differ from what I will refer to as *polynarrative*.

My focus in this dissertation is to identify some of the ways in which Italian Renaissance artists were able to infuse a sense of narrative continuity in their works, without resorting to the paradoxical repetition of the continuous narratives. Some of the formats that I will identify and examine are compositions that we might refer to as

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[5] See Franz Wickoff, *Roman Art: Some of Its Principles and Their Application to Early Christian Paintings.* Trans. S Arthur Strong (London: W. Heinemann, 1900) 8-15.

progressive or collapsed narratives. These narrative images can be either monoscenic or polyscenic.

Both the isolating and continuous methods are found in medieval and Renaissance art. Sequential narrative cycles were a popular means of storytelling during the thirteenth and fourteenth-centuries. Like a comic strip, these generally monoscenic compositions depict, frame by frame, the "highlights" of a longer narrative, in most cases significant stories from the Bible or the key moments of the lives of saints. These narrative cycles served to educate a largely illiterate audience, or certainly a public that did not have free access to the texts of the Gospels. Stylistically their long established iconographic traits were easy to recognize and highly didactic. Their spatial arrangement was usually schematic. They were generally (but not always) ordered chronologically, laid out in a manner similar to text, and arranged by and large in linear patterns.[6] One has only to think of narrative cycles such as the mosaics depicting the Genesis in the Basilica of San Marco in Venice, the fresco cycles of the life of St. Francis of the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, or Lorenzo Maitani's sculpted reliefs on the façade of the Orvieto Cathedral depicting the Christian timeline from the Genesis to the Last Judgment.

Continuous narratives were another visual storytelling technique common during the same period. These polyscenic compositions economized the space of a sequential narrative, condensing several moments/highlights of the narrative into a single pictorial frame. Nicola and Giovanni Pisano created masterful weaves of the Nativity narrative

[6] See Marilyn Lavin, *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). Lavin's research indicates several different sequential layouts of narrative cycle. Not all run in linear patterns; some layouts appear randomly ordered. See discussion of Lavin below.

and other stories into the relief panels of the pulpits in Siena (Nicola, 1260), the Church of Sant'Andrea in Pistoia and the Pisa Cathedral (Giovanni, respectively, 1298-1301 & 1302-11). The spatial arrangement in these works is by no means naturalistic, but the combination of stories (particularly in the Pisa pulpit) succeeds in capitalizing on the ratio of narrative moments depicted to available pictorial "canvas".[7]

With Masaccio, who began to employ Brunelleschi's discovery of one-point perspective, continuous narratives of the Quattrocento were set against a more naturalistic and spatially unified background. To the modern eye, and certainly to the neoclassical aesthetic philosophers, which I will discuss presently, the continuous narrative presents a paradox. These compositions show the protagonist(s) of the story repeatedly, performing various temporally and spatially discrete actions. The one-point perspective and unified setting give the illusion of temporal fixedness and as such implies a simultaneity of action, clearly violating the Aristotelian—or better, the Neoclassical—unities of space, time and action. But Renaissance audiences were not fooled by the visual simultaneity of continuous narrative compositions, even when a clear chronological order is not manifest. The viewer (or interpreter) has the responsibility of reconstructing the reading order and the internal chronology of the story.[8]

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[7] The six panels represent: 1) the Nativity (including the Washing of the Child) and the Annunciation to the Shepherds; 2) the Journey and the Adoration of the Magi, but also the Angel's warning to the Magi not to return to Herod (Matt. 2:12); 3) the Presentation at the Temple and the Flight in to Egypt; 4) the Massacre of the Innocents; 5) the Betrayal (kiss of Judas), the Mocking of Christ and the Flagellation; 6) the Crucifixion.

[8] See Paul Barolsky, "There is No Such Thing as Narrative Art." *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, Boston University, vol 18.2, (2010). Barolsky's notes the crucial role of the viewer to recreate the narrative art through prior knowledge of the story and in their ability to read the moments of the continuous narrative in their proper order.

The polynarratives I will consider appear as a single synchronic moment, yet an attentive inspection and cross-referencing of the source text(s) reveals that temporally distinct moments are skillfully woven into the composition of the painting, at times explicitly and others implicitly by way of symbols. They depict multiple synchronic moments/instances of a lengthier narrative simultaneously and harmoniously, while still avoiding repetition. In this dissertation, I will present close readings of narrative images that, through a variety of approaches, suggest a continuity of narrative.

An example of a monoscenic image that suggests temporal progression is seen in the *Entombment of Christ*, ca. 1450, attributed to Fra Angelico (Figure 4). The central subject is the Entombment, but there are details in the image that direct the mind to other events (the Passion, the Crucifixion, the Deposition and the future Resurrection) allowing the spectator to plot a timeline, and chart the temporal progress of the narrative. Laid out on a stark white cloth in the foreground, we see the instruments of the Passion: the nails and the crown of thorns. The angle of the foreshortened cloth leads the eye to an open gate and a path just beyond the group of mourners preparing Christ's body for the tomb. These lead to Golgotha in the distance, where the bodies of the two thieves can still be seen on their respective crosses. The center cross, to which Christ had formerly been nailed, now stands vacant. Behind the body of Christ, on the right, the door to the tomb where he will soon be placed stands open. The open door also alludes that moment, three days hence, when the women will return to the tomb only to find it open and the body of Christ gone. Despite the painting's straightforward presentation of a single synchronic

moment, the symbols, clues, and spatial arrangement of the composition allow the viewer to read the image as a series of events unfolding over a length of time.

Collapsed narratives display different synchronic moments of a single narrative event, side by side. The temporal abridgment of the visual narrative may serve, above all, a didactic purpose: to create a greater sense of clarity between a cause and effect. That an artist would choose to juxtapose temporally discrete actions of a single episode/event (in what we may view as a single unified instant) indicates that, although Renaissance artists sought to recreate their painted worlds with the same naturalism observed in the empirical world, their depicted spaces may have operated on alternate planes of temporal perception, much broader than our own. In Chapter Two we will examine various visual interpretations of the *Annunciation* in search of a compositional rendering of the story that satisfies the description of a collapsed composition proposed by Dante's poetry in *Purgatory* canto 10.

Another category of progressive narratives are those that are polyscenic. The continuous narratives, mentioned above, are inherently polyscenic since they combine, for example, several episodes of the life of a saint into a single frame. Polyscenic compositions may combine multiple events or instances of a single narrative, or scenes from different narratives altogether. If we were inclined to split hairs, we could make the argument that since Dante's *Annunciation* comprises two distinct moments of the narrative event, as a compositional form, it could be called polyscenic. In order to avoid confusion and to encompass all the possible variations, I have opted to refer to these types of combined images as polynarratives. As we shall see, particularly in Chapter

Three, polynarratives can also be intertextual, combining stories and symbols from different narratives and textual sources. These might also consist of typological relationships between Old and New Testament stories, between the old and new orders of the Judeo-Christian world.

In their own right, typological pairings reveal a temporal continuity—a cyclicality even—of history. The combination of narrative sources/texts is another way in which an artist could lengthen the intrinsic timeline of the implied narrative in his art. An example of this can be seen in Fra Angelico's 1434 *Annunciation* in Cortona (Figure 5) the artist has simultaneously shown the angel speaking visible words to the Virgin separated into two registers (*Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te / et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi*) and her response (*ecce ancilla Domini fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*) written upside-down and backward (to show their directionality) between the two halves of the angel's pronouncement. Fra Angelico has thereby condensed this before and after, proposition and response, to one visual expression. This action of conversation, in and of itself, adds a dimension of duration to the composition that is subtle and does not disturb our understanding of such a fundamental scene from the gospel of Luke.

Fra Angelico's Cortona *Annunciation* is also polynarrative. In the background he has included an *Expulsion from Eden*, an event which took place long before the Annunciation. The inclusion of the Expulsion creates a bridge between these two events that is temporal but also typological. It imparts a more profound significance on the conversational exchange. Through the contemplation of the viewer, it extends the narrative to prophecy. This is also suggested by the figure of the prophet with a scroll, in

the sculpted roundel directly above and between the Angel and Mary.[9] Typological details such as these lend deeper significance to the redemptive gravitas of the words of Gabriel and rediscovered humility of Mary's response. The Expulsion was the effect of man's pride, while the Annunciation of Christ is the possibility of a second chance, one that is sealed with Mary's humble words and unconditional acceptance. Showing them simultaneously is certainly didactic in purpose, but it also suggests the years of history, progress and growth between one causal moment and the effect, or the solution.

Finally, in this dissertation, I intend consider the role of the viewer and how spectatorship translates into narrative experience. Unfortunately much of the artwork we see today has been robbed of a layer of its meaning, in the sense that it has been taken from its original context and placed in a gallery, giving etymological weight to the phrase "lost in translation". The location/placement and destination of artwork was an intrinsic part of its being. Artwork that we still view today *in situ*, is rarely experienced under the same conditions that were present at its time of production. If we are talking about fifteenth-century frescos in a church, today they will be illuminated with electricity. They may also be surrounded by layers of subsequent decoration (like seventeenth-century stuccos or a sixteenth-century altarpiece) that might detract from the original experience. Moreover, these works of art may have undergone damage, or shoddy restorations and touch-ups over the years, altering their appearance. Art viewed in a museum might be arranged chronologically, creating a different sort overarching narrative based on the diachronic evolution of history of art. If they are arranged thematically or by place of

[9] The prophet is meant to represent the prophecy of Isaiah (7:14): "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son" See Diane Cole Ahl, *Fra Angelico* (London: Phaidon, 2008), 104.

origin, we might be inclined to read them from the point of view of stylistic similarities and differences (Hall 2 of the Uffizi with the *Maestà* panels of Cimabue, Duccio and Giotto is a good example).

Stemming from the idea of location, the viewer's interaction with the art will also be considered. If it is three-dimensional, how does moving around it affect how the work is interpreted? Was there originally a set path or approach that the viewer was destined to take to experience the art? How can this change the way we see it today in a museum? These are questions that will be addressed in Chapter Five, in the discussion of some of Michelangelo's sculptures and how the narrative often relates directly to viewer vantage points. Other notions to consider regarding viewer experience are the accessibility of a work of art and the type of audience that would have viewed it. A more literate audience, familiar with the narrative source(s), will certainly have a better understanding of various levels of interpretation, appreciating deeper symbolic and allegorical implications. When possible, contemporary sources, in which the authors give personal accounts or descriptions of the artwork, will be closely examined, but regrettably these will not provide a broad sampling of experiences from across the spectrum of society.

A brief historiography of the temporal "limitations" of pictorial arts

In its most basic of definitions, a narrative is a chain of events over a period of time. In the so-called temporal arts (for instance, a novel, a play or a movie) we tend to think of narrative time as a continuous and indissoluble flow of events. On the other hand, we think of the static arts of painting and sculpture as synchronic by nature and

non-sequential. The simultaneous experience of visual art—the manner in which it displays itself all at once—fosters the notion that painting and sculpture depict a fixed point in time rather than portraying a portion of a dynamic reality. This reductive approach to interpreting painting and sculpture as essentially timeless and non-sequential received its theoretical basis from eighteenth-century aesthetics. Philosophers such as Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), James Harris (1709-1780), and Gotthold E. Lessing 1729-1781, established an enduring doctrine that the visual arts could, or should, depict only one specific *punctum temporis* (point in time).

As an example of this lasting principle concerning the pictorial arts, I make reference to an example I encountered recently. In the trailer for the latest Sky 3D film entitled, *Florence and the Uffizi Gallery 3D/4K* (release date: November 2015), the clip begins with gorgeous footage shot with cameras on drones, offering views of Florence we might otherwise never experience. Next appear the words: "What if time stood still?" This question is followed by a slow zoom-in of Artemisia Gentileschi's 1620 Uffizi *Judith*, then a brief glance at Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (c. 1485), followed by a jump-cut to a close-up of Venus' face and the words: "Like in a painting."[10] There is a subtle irony in the author's declaration that time in a painting stands still (objectively, the image is, of course, static) while the subjective gaze of the camera lens brings the image to life. It pans and focuses on certain elements, while selectively eliminating others. By doing so the camera creates its own narrative path as our own eyes might do if we were standing in front of these paintings. Undoubtedly, temporality within a work of art is a consequence

[10] URL to the Sky promotional video in question: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0YFN0Cqg9U

of spectatorship, as the viewer's mind decodes and organizes what it sees. But spectatorship and the viewer's experience has only just begun to be explored in terms of the role of time in the visual arts.

Speaking to the limitations of painting in terms of its inability to depict a sense of narrative duration, Shaftesbury, in his 1713 essay, *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules,* writes:

> 'TIS evident that every Master in Painting, when he has made choice of the determinate Date or Point of Time, according to which *he* wou'd represent his History, is afterwards debar'd the taking advantage from any other Action than what is immediately present, and belonging to that single Instant he describes: for if he passes the present only for a moment, he may as well pass it for many years; and by this reckoning he may with as good right repeat the same Figure several times over, and in one and the same Picture represent Hercules in his Cradle struggling with the Serpents, and the same Hercules of full Age fighting with the *Hydra,* with *Antaeus,* and with *Cerberus:* which wou'd prove a mere confus'd Heap, or Knot of Pieces, and not a single entire Piece, or *Tablature* of the Historical kind.[11]

Shaftesbury, clearly not a proponent of continuous narratives, felt that they did not preserve what he calls a "Conformity with Historical Truth" because there is no respect for the Aristotelian unity of time and action as it was understood in neoclassical aesthetics. In order to observe the "Rule of Consistency," only events that might "subsist or happen together in one and the same instant" should be depicted simultaneously.[12] Shaftesbury does however concede the possibility of alluding to future events, by means of symbols; for example, the artist could depict the infant Hercules with a small club or a

[11] Shaftesbury, *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules* (London: A. Baldwin, 1713), 9.
[12] Shaftesbury, 10.

lion's skin, in order to prophesize, or allude to, his future actions, while continuing to respect poetic truth.[13]

A fellow Englishman, James Harris, made similar claims regarding the narrative capabilities of the visual arts in his *Three Treatises* of 1744, where he compares and contrasts the individual superiorities of painting, poetry and music. Since painting, he maintains, can only capture what belongs to the realm of the visible, it is superior in imitating shape and color, but since painting is static, it can only represent what is motionless and is therefore necessarily constrained to representing a single instant:

> All Actions and Events, whose Integrity or Wholeness depends upon a short and self-evident Succession of Incidents—Or if the Succession be extended, then such Actions at least, whose Incidents are all along, during that Succession, similar—All Actions, which being qualified as above, open themselves into a large variety of circumstances, concurring all in the same Point of Time.[14]

In a footnote, Harris succinctly sums up his argument with the following words: "of necessity every Picture is a *Punctum Temporis."*

In his seminal essay *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), Gotthold Lessing argued that painting and poetry are incommensurate art forms and represent narrative in fundamentally different ways. In Lessing's view poetry is a temporal or rhythmic art, in which narrative develops diachronically over a series of actions and descriptions. Painting, by contrast, is a purely spatial art that allows the viewer to experience only a representation of one significant event singled out by the artist from the narrative flow. Lessing called this single synchronic moment the

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[13] Shaftesbury, 10.

[14] James Harris, *Three Treatises: The First Concerning Art, the Second Concerning Music, Painting and Poetry, the Third Concerning Happiness* (London: I. Nourse & P. Vaillant, 1765).

fruchtbare Augenblick, the pregnant (or fruitful) moment: "Painting can use only a single moment of an action in its coexisting compositions and must therefore choose the one which is most suggestive and from which the preceding and succeeding actions are most easily comprehensible."[15] Ironically, the very fact that the pregnant moment should indicate what happened previously and what will happen next in the narrative implies already a sense of duration or continuity, at least within the viewer's reading of the image. Nonetheless, in Lessing's view, multiple actions pertaining to temporally distinct parts of a narrative cannot be represented simultaneously within one single work without violating the neoclassical unities of space, time, and action.

> It is an intrusion of the painter into the domain of the poet, which good taste can never sanction, when the painter combines in one and the same picture two points necessarily separate in time, as does Fra [sic] Mazzuoli when he introduces the rape of the Sabine women and the reconciliation effected by them between their husbands and relations, or as Titian does when he presents the entire history of the prodigal son, his dissolute life, his misery, and his repentance.[16]

Lessing's views on the *punctum temporis*, have, significantly enough, remained the standard for the way that we view narrative time in painting and sculpture. It is not uncommon in art history texts to read descriptions of art which begin with the words "it depicts the moment that...." Let us take as an example, Leonardo's *Last Supper,* an image over which much ink has been spilled in determining precisely which instant the artist chose to represent:

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[15] G. E. Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, Trans. and intro. E. A. McCormick, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 78.

[16] Lessing, 91. Lessing appears to have erroneously attributed a *Rape of the Sabines* to "Fra Mazzuoli" (i.e. Francesco Mazzuoli "il Parmigianino"). Likewise he attributes a Prodigal son narrative to Titian. No such works are known today, to be attributed to these artists. In *The Life and Times of Titian: With Some Account of His Family*, Volume 2 by Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista, (London: J. Murray, 1881) there is mention of a *Return of the Prodigal Son* (No 111 in the Lochis collection of the Accademia di Carrara in Bergamo) among the list of uncertified Titians (pp. 438-39).

- The scene portrays the moment when Christ declares to his disciples that one of them will betray him.[17]
- It portrays the moment after Christ has just announced that one amongst them will betray him.[18]
- The picture portrays the moment when Jesus offers the bread and wine as the sacrificial body of redemption.[19]

Even from these few examples, it is easy to see how art historians are determined to pinpoint the action of a narrative painting as a precise *punctum temporis*. No doubt, in modern times, this need of precision is closely connected to the stop-action capabilities of photographic imagery that surrounds us. In any event, these examples also present a problem; no matter how exact the *punctum temporis* of the *Last Supper,* there remains a clear difference of opinion among scholars regarding which moment is being represented. As a result, there may not necessarily be a clear, one-size-fits-all reading or explanation of a given image. In Chapter Four of this dissertation we will examine, in fact, how Leonardo appears to have succeeded in blurring the lines of temporal precision of his interpretation of the Last Supper narrative.

For this reason, we should be careful not to attribute the aesthetic preferences and definitions of neoclassical academics to the practices of early modern artists. We should ask instead: what was the Renaissance view of time and narrative in painting and sculpture? Odd as it may seem, there are no prescriptive rules among Renaissance texts specifically regarding how to show temporal progress in paintings. In Book Two of his treatise *On Painting* (1435), Alberti discusses the fact that pleasure in a *historia*, which

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[17] Lilian H. Zirpolo, *Historical Dictionary of Renaissance Art. (*Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 224.
[18] Ben Rogers, *Is Nothing Sacred?* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 53.
[19] Ralph A Smith, *The Sense of Art: A Study in Aesthetic Education* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 236.

loosely translated is a sort of narrative, can be found in its "plentiful variety." Copiousness and variety are good because they add visual interest: "so charming and attractive as to hold the eye of the learned and unlearned spectator for a long while with a certain sense of pleasure and emotion."[20] His term *varietas* does not specifically make reference to a variety of narrative actions/episodes, but it also does not prohibit them. Variety for Alberti is understood in terms of figures and physical types (i.e. old, young, women, men, children) as well as a range physiognomies and expressions, with the stipulation that all the elements are "appropriate to what is going on in the picture."[21] He does not define whether the action in the painting must represent one incontestable instant, nor whether it might include a sense of narrative duration. Alberti's only specific reference to time is related to the role of the spectator and the length of time they devote to contemplating the painting: "when the spectator dwells on observing all the details, then the painter's richness will acquire favor."[22]

Like Alberti, Leonardo also recommends a good use of variety, provided that the artist respect what is appropriate.

> Again I remind you that movements should not be so extravagant nor so excessively active that a peaceful scene seems to be a battle nor a morris-dance of drunken men, and above all, that the bystanders in a situation which the narrative painting represents, should show interest in it, with attitudes that display admiration, respect, pain, suspicion, fear, joy, or whatever is called for.[23]

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[20] Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture. The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua.* Translation and introduction by Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), II.40.
[21] Alberti, II.40
[22] Alberti, II.40
[23] Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, ed. A. P. McMahon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), III.418 (p. 155) *"Ed an cora ti ricordo che i movimenti non sieno tanto sbalestrati, e tanto mossi, che la pace paja battaglia o moresca d' ubriachi, e sopra il tutto che i circostanti al caso per il quale è fatta l'istoria sieno intenti con atti che mostrino ammirazione , riverenza, dolore, sospetto, paura, o gaudio*

Here we can discern Leonardo's concern for a unity of *effect* over a unity of action: in the sense that additional figures—that share the same space—must react to depicted events in ways that are decorous and suitable to the situation. Moreover, Leonardo, a master of scientific observation, also appears to have little concern for violating the temporal unity within a painting:

> If you ask: how shall I paint the life of a saint divided into many episodes on one and the same wall? I answer, that you must put the first episode large in size, and then, diminishing the figures and buildings on the various hills and plains progressively, you will make provision for the whole narrative. The rest of the wall, up to the top, paint full of trees of a size that bears relation to the figures, or fill it with angels if these should be suitable to the story, or birds, or clouds or such subjects.[24]

It was much worse, in Leonardo's opinion, to disturb the spatial unity:

> There is a universal custom followed by those who paint on the walls of chapels which is much to be deplored. They make a composition with its landscape and buildings on one plane, then go higher and make a composition in which they change the point of view, and then paint a third and a fourth, so that one wall has four points of view. That is the utmost stupidity on the part of those masters. We know that the point of view is placed opposite the eye of the observer of the composition.[25]

Leonardo was undoubtedly accustomed to the tradition of the continuous narrative. The tradition dates back well before Giotto, but it is only with Masaccio and the advent of

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, secondo che richiede il caso per il quale è fatto il congiunto , o vero concorso delle figure" (Trattato, p 157).

[24] Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting,* II.265 (pp. 109-110). *"…e se tu volessi dire: come ho da fare la vita d' un Santo compartita in molte istorie in una medesima faccia? A questo ti rispondo , che tu debba porre il primo piano col punto all' altezza dell' occhio de' riguardanti d' essa istoria , e nel detto piano figura la prima istoria grande, e poi di mano in mano diminuendo le figure e casamenti in su diversi colli e pianure, farai tutto il fornimento d' essa istoria . Pel resto della faccia, nella sua altezza, farai alberi grandi a comparazione delle figure, o angeli, se fossero al proposito dell' istoria, ovvero uccelli, o nuvoli, o simili cose" (Trattato,* 63).

[25] *"Questo universal uso il quale si fa per i pittori nelle faccie delle cappelle, è molto da essere ragionevolmente biasimato, imperocché fanno lì un' istoria in un piano col suo paese ed edifizj, poi alzano un altro grado, e fanno un' istoria, e variano il punto dal primo, poi la terza e la quarta, in modo che una facciata si vede fatta con quattro punti, la quale è somma stoltizia di simili maestri. Noi sappiamo che il punto è posto all' occhio del riguardatore dell' istoria (Trattato,* 63*).*

linear perspective, that the continuous, or sequential narrative, is placed into a unified space with a single vanishing point, as can been seen in the Brancacci Chapel fresco *The Tribute Money* (Figure 6). Masaccio depicted the three major events of the narrative in three parts, which are not arranged in a linear reading order. The principal subject or problem (how to pay the tribute) is depicted at the center of the composition. The first and second halves of the solution to the problem (finding the coins in the fish at the lake, and paying the tax collector) are portrayed respectively to the left and to the right of the initial action. Vasari's reading of the image, as a spectator, however, relates the narrative flow of these sequential events in a way that is as natural and continuous as the pictorial space of Masaccio's one-point perspective setting.

> …we can recognize there the ardour of S. Peter in his questioning and the attentiveness of the Apostles, who are standing in various attitudes around Christ, awaiting his determination, with gestures so vivid they truly appear alive. Wonderful, above all, is S. Peter who, while he is laboring to draw the money from the belly of the fish, has his head suffused with blood by reason of bending down; and he is even more wonderful as he pays the tribute and the eagerness of him who is receiving it and looking at the money in his hands with the greatest pleasure.[26]

Vasari shows no concern that Peter is depicted three times and the tax collector twice. Rather, he praises Masaccio for various expressions of the disciples, of Peter and the tax collector, which help set the emotional tone of the event and add to its verisimilitude.

Similarly, in Vasari's description of Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise panels, there is no sense of unease whatsoever for the temporal anomalies and repetitions within the

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[26] Vasari, *Lives of the Painter, Sculptors, and Architects*, p 322. ("*vi si conosce l'ardir di San Piero nella dimanda e la attenzione degl'Apostoli nelle varie attitudini intorno a Cristo, aspettando la resoluzione con gesti sì pronti che veramente appariscon vivi; et il San Piero massimamente, il quale nell'affaticarsi a cavare i danari del ventre del pesce ha la testa focosa per lo stare chinato; e molto più quando e' paga il tributo, dove si vede l'affetto del contare e la sete di colui che riscuote, che si guarda i danari in mano con grandissimo piacere.*" Vasari, *Le vite,* 228).

narratives themselves. Vasari praises the sculptor's masterpiece and mentions that he has depicted, within each panel, the details of four stories ("*in ogni quadro gli effetti di quattro storie*") and that his figures and the scenes are perfectly rendered ("*perfettissimamente condotti*").[27] The fact that four episodes or moments (*storie*) are depicted within the same harmonious pictorial frame poses no apparent difficulty for Vasari. Despite writing his assessment of Ghiberti in the mid-sixteenth-century, when the continuous narrative was—at least in central Italy—no longer as fashionable a mode of representation, Vasari does not describe it as being old-fashioned. Quite the contrary, he is impressed by Ghiberti's masterful weave of episodes within each individual panel.

The complexity of the deep space and three-dimensional effect created by Ghiberti's use of perspective provided even more room for the artist to depict additional moments of the story. So, while linear perspective increased the artist's capability to visually reproduce the world we see around us, it did not necessarily tie the space to a synchronic instant, continuous narratives continued to flourish. Examples such as Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise panels and Vasari's praise of them a century later suggest that, despite what may appear paradoxical to the modern eye, continuous narratives were not viewed negatively in the Renaissance. Instead, they tend to support the fact that the Renaissance notion of narrativity in static images was far broader than our modern conception of images frozen in time.[28] Jules Lubbock has indeed concluded that the continuous and sequential narrative cycles were most likely not considered to be isolated

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[27] Vasari, *Le vite*, 213.
[28] Jack M. Greenstein "Mantegna, Leonardo and the times of painting," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, 15:3 (1999) 218.

and divisible works of art but instead were meant "to provide a visual digest or summary of the whole story or episode for didactic purposes."[29] I would add that continuous narratives (but also other polynarrative compositions produced in the Renaissance) offer great didactic versatility since, much like the variations of rhetorical structures found in religious sermons, they could be read in any number of orders and still be equally as valid in making their point.

Lessing's comparisons of the diachronic and synchronic natures of the art of poetry and painting were not entirely unfamiliar in the sixteenth-century. Despite their diametrically opposed conclusions, 250 years earlier, in his *Treatise on Painting,* Leonardo da Vinci had already anticipated similar notions in his famous *paragone* of poetry and painting. Leonardo championed the sense sight over sound. Thus, he considered painting, because of its superior level of imitation, visual complexity and richness of detail superior to poetry, which achieves the same level of detail only over time and through a long series of verses:

> Now see what a difference there is between hearing a thing related, which over a period of time gives pleasure to the ear, and seeing it instantaneously with that *speed* with which things in nature are seen. Moreover, the poet's creations are read over long intervals of time, and frequently they are not understood [....]. But the work of the painter is immediately understood by those who look at it.[30]

Time, it would appear, even for Leonardo, does play a crucial role. The immediacy (*prestezza*) with which the entire scene is made available its viewer occurs "*tutto in un*

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[29] Jules Lubbock, *Storytelling in Christian Art from Giotto to Donatello* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 283.

[30] Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, I.37 (p. 25). "*Or vedi che differenza è dall'udir raccontare una cosa che dia piacere all'occhio con lunghezza di tempo, o vederla con quella prestezza che si vedono le cose naturali. Ed ancorché le cose de' poeti sieno con lungo intervallo di tempo lette, spesse sono le volte che le non sono intese […] ma l'opera del pittore immediate è compresa da' suoi riguardatori." (Trattato,* 17*)*

tempo" (I.28), all at once, as it happens in nature, suggesting a more faithful form of mimesis. Elaborating his thoughts, Leonardo compares the painted image of a beautiful face to that of a choir whose members sing together in a divine harmony so beautiful that it astounds those who hear it. It is possible for the viewer to appreciate each beautiful feature of the countenance individually, but will find the most pleasure in the divine proportions of those features assembled together in a harmonious accord (*armonico concento*). Poetry, on the other hand, because of its diachronic and linear nature, can only ever present a concatenation of solo performances (*ciascuna voce per sé sola in varî tempi*), never attaining a harmonious unity.[31]

It should be noted that Leonardo's idea of "*in un subito*" (in an instant), is not the same as Lessing's idea of a single, significant pregnant moment. Leonardo's comment is viewer-centric; it refers to the viewer's instant gratification of having all of the details presented at once as a harmonious whole, allowing the spectator to immediately pass to the process of examining and contemplating all the various details that make up its composition.[32] Like Alberti, Leonardo does not consider the temporal nature of a work of art to be measured in terms of the length and duration of the narrative it depicts. Time is measured in terms external to the work of art, and instead is rooted in the subjectivity of

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[31] Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting* I.17, p. 27; see also Sixten Ringbom, "The Problem of Indirect Narration in the Academic Theory of Painting" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 52 (1989), 34-35; 42-44.

[32] Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting* I.42, p. 28 "*La pittura ti rappresenta in un subito la sua essenza nella virtú visiva, e per il proprio mezzo, d'onde la impressiva riceve gli obietti naturali, ed ancora nel medesimo tempo, nel quale si compone l'armonica proporzionalità delle parti che compongono il tutto, che contenta il senso*." *(Trattato,* 17*) (*Painting, in an instant, presents its essence to your visual virtue by the same means as the *impressiva* receives natural objects. Furthermore, at the same time, a harmonic proportionality of the parts is composed that compose the whole which delights sense [Farago, *Paragone,* 221]).

the viewer's experience. Enduring artwork speaks to the spectator on some level. It is universal; it has the ability to pique and hold the interest of the viewer by remaining relevant and, somehow, always in the present.

As noted, Renaissance theories of art do not specify the necessity of a fixed *punctum temporis* in the depiction of narrative subject matter. It is possible, however, to identify examples from Renaissance painting and sculpture where artists have made a concerted effort to do just that: to capture the heightened drama and intensity of a *specific* point in a narrative. One example is Brunelleschi's *Sacrifice of Isaac* (1401), his entry for the competition for the of Baptistery doors commission. The panels of both finalists, Ghiberti and Brunelleschi (Figure 7), portray the moment when Abraham is about to take the decisive action to kill his son. In Ghiberti's panel (Figure 8), Abraham is still and statuelike —only the sleeve of his robe flutters. He stares into his son's eyes with knife in hand, but the blade is poised several inches from Isaac's throat. The angel, still at a distance, appears with one hand across his chest and the other raised in a gesture of speech, to deliver the message. In contrast to the somewhat generalized moment of Ghiberti's composition, Brunelleschi's panel (Figure 9) condenses the narrative arc into a single pinpointed moment which is decisive for the fatal act. Brunelleschi has compressed the action into a single pregnant moment, capturing the act at the height of the narrative drama. In Brunelleschi's panel Abraham already has the sacrificial blade pressed against Isaac's throat, and the forward motion of his body signals his next move. Here, the angel must physically intervene and impede Abraham's hand from plunging the knife any further into his son's throat. Despite his dramatic depiction and narrative

immediacy, Brunelleschi's novel composition was not enough to win him the important commission. Whatever the final deciding factor, it would appear that the isolation of such a precision moment of the narrative was not an imperative for the jury.

There is, nonetheless, a sort of temporal—or perhaps spatial—disconnect in Brunelleschi's panel that hinders the entire scene from being a single, unified, pregnant moment. If the three principle figures are meant to share the same physical space as the two servants, the ass, and the ram, one would not expect to see the men calmly pulling thorns from their feet or adjusting their boots, nor would we expect the donkey to graze peacefully or the ram scratch its ear. If they are indeed part of the same space, we might expect them to react to the dramatic action unfolding behind them. According to the principles of appropriateness expressed in the treatises of Alberti and Leonardo, if the men are participants or witnesses of the scene, they should react accordingly. It is as if there is either a temporal or invisible spatial barrier between the two parts of the composition. In Ghiberti's panel a spatial separation between the two parties is made more manifest by the presence of a rock wall.

Another rare and fascinating example of an artist going to great lengths to pinpoint a precise instant is Lorenzo Lotto's 1534 *Recanati Annunciation* (Figure 10). Lotto has made an attempt to capture the startling suddenness of Mary's surprise at the arrival of the angel. It is clear that Mary has just been jolted out of her meditation since her oddly twisted kneeling position conveys the impression that her pose is only a momentary state that she assumes involuntarily. Her hands up, shoulders hunched

gesture gives the indication of both shock and self-preservation, as if the roof were about to come down on top of her. The details of the frightened cat fleeing the scene enhance the unexpectedness of the event. Mary's state of confusion is countered by the attention of the cat which, fully aware of the source of the disturbance, glares at the angel as he makes his escape. The angel's flowing hair and fluttering robes suggest that he has just landed. His arm is raised in a *loquendi* gesture, but his mouth is still closed giving the impression that he has not yet uttered his greeting. Reinforcing Lotto's choice of this precise point in the narrative (the moment just prior to the "*Ave!*"), we notice that the dove of the Holy Spirit has not yet been sent by God, in fact, it does not even appear in the composition. What Lotto has achieved in his *Annunciation* parallels what Brunelleschi accomplished in his *Sacrifice of Isaac*: both artists have condensed the narrative to an extremely exact and dramatic instant. Lotto's inclusion of the hourglass, evoking the steady flow of time, contrasts markedly with his very deliberate attempt to depict a narrative moment with exceptional specificity.

Modern scholarship regarding temporality in the pictorial arts

Much of the art historical discussion concerning pictorial narrativity in the Renaissance centers on continuous narratives. In fact, there are some who would argue that most art produced during the Renaissance and afterward is fundamentally non-narrative. They consider the continuous narrative to be the only true form of pictorial narrative since the repetition and multiple of actions undoubtedly imply a succession of

events. Some scholars have studied pictorial narrativity as a product of spectatorship, but few art historians have considered the possibility of a similar temporal expanse in images where there is no repetition of characters and that appear fixed in time due to a single vanishing point. My aim in this dissertation is to continue in the steps of the few scholars who have contemplated broader definitions of temporal narrativity within Renaissance art. In essence, I aim to show how some images that appear monoscenic and "temporally fixed," may in truth by polynarrative, simultaneously depicting multiple synchronic moments of one or more narratives, but in ways that are both harmonious and seamless, that do not resort to the repetitive methods of the continuous narrative. Before entering such discussion, it would be beneficial to examine some of the progress that has been made in the area of time and the pictorial arts.

In recent years, the theme of time and art has been studied more by semioticians and cognitive scientists than by art historians. In the 1960s, the Russian psychologist Alfred Yarbus conducted research on foveal vision by tracking eye scan patterns of patients while they examined a painting.[33] Yarbus' research demonstrated that eye saccades (micro-adjustment of the eyes) dart rapidly between the areas of the image that are most rich in information which, in the case of his control painting Ilya Repin's "Unexpected Visitors" (1884-1888), were the faces, gestures and expressions of the figures. In other words, focus was on those details that would help the viewer to interpret the action or narrative of the painting. Improvements in diagnostic equipment in the last

[33] Yarbus, Alfred. *Eye Movements and Vision* (New York:Plenum Press, 1967). See also Margaret Livingstone, *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing* (New York: Harry Abrams, 2002); Michael Ranta, "Stories in Pictures (and Non-Pictorial Objects) – A Narratological and Cognitive Psychological Approach." *Contemporary Aesthetics*, volume 9 (2011).

few years have encouraged other scientists to pick up where Yarbus left off, testing not only figurative art but also abstract art. Overall, the findings remain more or less consistent with those of Yarbus; in its attempt to decode the image, the eye tends to focus on the areas of salient interest, where there is the greatest amount of information.[34] Although these studies do not allow us to understand how the subjects perceive time or a storyline within a work of art, they shed light on how the eye examines and scours the image for information, in an attempt to seek order and understanding.

Within the field of philosophy, Henri Bergson (1859 -1941) gave considerable thought to how humans perceive space and time, duration, simultaneity and experience.[35] Bergson divided the notion of time into two categories: duration and spatial time. Like many of Bergson's studies, time and space are considered both as perceptions from inside the mind (i.e. time of experience) and as quantifiable and measurable units from the outside the mind in the empirical world (i.e. lived time or what Bergson calls *durée rélle* or real duration). The two rarely coincide. Humans seldom experience time at the same rate in which it is measured scientifically; we may experience time as moving slowly or quickly based on personal perception, our surroundings, and level of activity or stimulus.

Bergson also surmised that what we experience as duration is unavoidably spatialized in our consciousness. Whether we are counting, re-imagining an event/action,

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[34] See, for example, Benjamin W. Tatler et al., "Yarbus, eye movements, and vision," *i-Perception*, v.1 (2010); Rodrigo Quian Quiroga and Carlos Pedreira, "How Do We See Art: An Eye-Tracker Study" *Frontiers of Human Neuroscience*, v.5 (2011).

[35] See, in particular, Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), and *Matter and Memory* (1896); *Bergson: Key Writings,* Eds. Keith Ansell Pearson & John Mullarkey (London: Continuum, 2002); Antoinette Roesler-Friedenthal and Johannes Nathan "The Time of Spectatorship," *The Enduring Instant: Time and the spectator in the Visual Arts,* Eds. A. Roesler-Friedenthal, J. Nathan (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2003). See also the reference to G.H. Hamilton's article "Cézanne, Bergson and the Image of Time" in the conclusion of this dissertation.

or even recalling a rhythm, we necessarily establish an order of succession (a narrative progression, if you will), and this order attains a temporal duration, which is laid out in a spatial construct within our mind. "If we introduce an order in what is successive, the reason is that succession is converted into simultaneity and is projected into space."[36] This is true for Bergson on any number of levels, whether we are counting sheep in a field or the tolls of a bell; what we perceive as duration of time (the time required to count), he sees as also occupying a space. The arrangement of the flock of sheep in a field is certainly spatial, but so is our perception of counting them because within our mind we are choosing an order and, whether systematic or arbitrary, that order moves within a perceived space. The toll of the bell arrives to our ear in a successive order that we can count, but there is a period in between each strike that occupies space on a simulated timeline, a spatial construct created by our mind.[37]

Bergson's idea of the perception of duration as spatial, in many ways, coincides with the way Renaissance artists spatially organized their compositions to suggest a reading order, or timeline of succession in their artwork. It seems a valid starting point is the consideration of narrative temporality in painting and sculpture, as well as the spectator's perception/experience in artwork, but oddly Bergson's theories have been largely overlooked regarding the question of time in the static arts in general, as has the topic in general.

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[36] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 60.
[37] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 49-56.

To some extent, aesthetic philosopher Etienne Souriau did have Bergson in mind when he wrote his essay "Time in the Plastic Arts."[38] Souriau was thinking of Bergson's study of time in music, be he seems to have been channeling Bergson's idea of duration, when he wrote: "Every work of art creates its own universe. And whoever speaks of a universe speaks of a whole built upon a space-time network. This is as true of painting or architecture, of ceramics or of landscaping, as of music, poetry, or the cinema."[39] Souriau clearly did not subscribe to the reductive line of reasoning that categorizes the arts as either "temporal" (poetry, music, dance) or "spatial" (painting, sculpture, architecture). In his view, the notion that the static arts condense space, time and action to one synchronic instant is inherently false. Although it is possible to see a two-dimensional painting "all at once", it is usually not fully understood in one glance, but must undergo a process of inspection on behalf of the viewer. Souriau suggests, therefore, that the element of time in the plastic arts resides both internally and externally to the object itself. He categorizes these two points of view as "intrinsic time" and "time of contemplation." Intrinsic time is described as the space and time occupied by the breadth of the narrative and any other representational content of the work. The external time and space of the artwork is communicated through its physical form and the space it occupies, but also by time required to read it, contemplate it and reflect on it.

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[38] Etienne Souriau, "Time in the Plastic Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol 7, issue 4, (June 1949), 300.
[39] Souriau, p. 294

More recently, narrative temporality in the arts has been addressed mostly from the external point of view of the spectator.[40] In Paul Barolsky's provocatively titled article, "There's No Such Thing as Narrative Art," (2010) he argues that what we commonly consider "narrative" in art is just a figure of speech since the artwork itself cannot actually "tell" us anything, but instead only "shows" us things.[41] In his opinion, the notion of narrative progression is achieved through the viewers' recollection of the story and mental reconstruction of a timeline of events, as the viewer visually navigates and reorders the static image. It should be noted that Barolsky restricted his inquiry to continuous narratives since they represent an overt attempt to depict an unfolding narrative progression.[42]

I do not agree that continuous narratives are the only compositional styles that attempt a temporal duration. It is certainly true that external mediation on the part of the spectator plays a vital role in translating the object from a static image to a narrative, it is also true that each image represents its own temporal and spatial dimension (or "universe,

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[40] John Shearman, *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); *The Enduring Instant: Time and the Spectator in the Visual Arts,* Eds. A. Roesler-Friedenthal, J. Nathan (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2003).

[41] Paul Barolsky, op cit

[42] In her essay, "Pictorial Narrativity" (2004) Wendy Steiner contends that the only images in early modern art that can be defined as narrative images are, in fact, continuous narratives. Steiner argues that because of their static nature "the visual arts"—understood as having the temporal fixedness of Lessing's pregnant moment—"seem least narrative, indeed, definitionally anti-narrative" (150). Continuity, she says, is constructed through the character's role in the chain of events. Therefore, in order for an image to be considered a pictorial narrative, the subject must be seen repeatedly performing several actions, and exhibiting a logical and unmistakable reading order that links, by time and causality, the actions in their correct narrative order. (154) In Steiner's view "the institutionalization of pictorial realism in the Renaissance" (*vis a vis* linear perspective and a scientific observation of the natural world) "made pictorial narrative an impossibility" because it demanded the synchronicity of a single *punctum temporis.* See Steiner, Wendy. "Pictorial Narrativity." Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling. Ed. Marie-Laure, Ruppert, James and John W. Bernet Ryan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004), 145-177.

as Souriau called it). My goal is to explore temporality in Renaissance art both in terms of viewer interaction (how one reads, or approaches the work) but also the intrinsic time represented (i.e. the specific moment(s) depicted from the narrative, but also symbols or typological "hypertexts" that create links to a more distant past, or project it toward the future). In other words, the addition of other narratives or symbols in the background or elsewhere within the frame may expand the intrinsic timeline by associating the chronological "present" of the principal subject to a symbol representing a related event from the "past." The image is a text, but like any text, the role of the reader/spectator is paramount, since it is through the reading of the text that its significance can be interpreted and understood.

The essays of Ernst Gombrich, in particular "Moment and Movement in Art" (1964) and "Action and Expression in Western Art" (1970) were among the first studies to disprove the long-established tradition of the *punctum temporis* left by Lessing, Harris and Shaftesbury. Gombrich writes:

> Logically the idea that there is a moment which has no movement and can be seized and fixed in this static form by the artist, or for that matter, by the camera, certainly leads to Zeno's paradox. Even an instantaneous photograph records the traces of movement, a sequence of event, however brief. The idea of the *punctum temporis* is not only an absurdity logically, it is a worse absurdity psychologically. For we are not cameras but rather slow-registering instruments which cannot take in much at a time. [43]

[43] Gombrich, E. H. "Moment and Movement in Art," *The Image and the Eye: Further studies in the psychology of pictorial representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell university Press, 1982), 45.

Gombrich also interprets the intrinsic time of the image as being legible through the spatial relationships between action and space surrounding the figures and how it can affect the way we measure the temporality within the pictorial composition.[44]

An example might be the choir lofts of Donatello and Della Robbia from the Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence (Figure 11-Figure 12). Confined to their tight, boxed-in panels, the well-behaved musical *putti* of Della Robbia exhibit a restrained and fragmented sense of harmony. Donatello's *putti,* on the other hand, are a gregarious lot who sing and chase one another in Dionysian frenzy around the open colonnade of the *cantoria*. By allowing the *putti* room to run, Donatello has created the illusion of a prolonged action. The viewer sees both where they came from and where they are directed. The arrangement of the *putti* on a horizontal axis in various postures of running and their overlapping placement provides a sort of zoetropic illusion of movement through space, which thereby suggests a degree of time. Although neither of these scenes is specifically narrative, the action and duration implied in Donatello's *cantoria* creates a sense of progression and dialogue with the viewer, while that of della Robbia appears more decorative. The text of the Psalm that Della Robbia's boys are singing is inscribed in the registers above and below the panels, but the singers are architecturally divided into fragmented groups. Meanwhile, the flow of the text is continuous and would be better suited to Donatello's stream of running *putti*.

Lew Andrews' 1995 book, *Story and Space in Renaissance Art,* investigates the spatial arrangement of continuous narratives and how it relates to the chronology of the

[44] Gombrich (1982), 52-55.

narrative.[45] Andrews is particularly concerned with the Quattrocento phenomenon that combines episodic narration that takes place within a three-dimensional, one-point perspectival setting. The reduction of narrative frame to a distinct and realistic setting gives the illusion of a single moment in time. The multiple narrative events and the repetition of figures within the unity of the setting result in an image that the modern viewer might see as illogical. According to Andrews, fifteenth-century audiences understood that despite seeing them simultaneously presented, each scene occurred in a chronological sequence, over an extended period of time and across space.[46]

Andrews posits that linear perspective offered artists a deeper and more complex pictorial stage in which to arrange the various events, thereby increasing the possibilities of narrative unfolding across different parts of the available space.

> "...one-point perspective need not curtail or eliminate the representation of passing time, that is, continuous narrative, one-point perspective can also lead in the opposite direction. The restrictions that it apparently imposes with respect to time are in fact not mandated by the system itself, and the limitations that we take for granted are later accretions, reflections of a stringent "photographic" aesthetic in which pictorial realism is understood in decidedly literal term.
>
> (...) the system in itself does not, by definition, limit the duration of narrative action, on the contrary, one-point perspective provides a spacious setting in which action can occur.[47]

In other words, perspective does not hinder the continuous narrative, but provides it with more space and a higher level of narrative complexity. As we shall see in the Chapter

[45] Lew Andrews, *Story and Space in Renaissance Art.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
[46] Andrews, 17
[47] Andrews, 17-18.

Three discussion of Ghirlandaio, deep perspectival space provides a stage upon which the artist can plot an order of events to suggest a clear order of succession.

Related to space and reading order is Marilyn Lavin's book *The Place of Narrative* (1990) in which the author examines the data from systematic cataloguing of the variations in reading orders of sequential narrative cycles.[48] Her discoveries led to the understanding that not all patterns of arrangement followed the linear progression of the text source, in fact, some arrangements appear random or "out of order." Lavin suggests that some arrangements may have been connected to specific liturgical practices.[49] While she admits that concrete evidence to prove such connections between the arrangement of episodes and liturgical exegesis are difficult to prove, we can see how reading patterns were not simply linear. Her research does not specifically look at how each episode unfolds temporally within each frame, as much as it is concerned with understanding how the master narrative unfolds within the space of the chapel/church. Lavin's basic concept of random order can, however, be useful in considering how fifteenth-century audiences may have been accustomed to reading a work of art, i.e. not necessarily in a linear order.

In his book *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative,* Jack Greenstein gives a comprehensive exploration of the meaning of the term *historia* throughout the ages in the attempt to: 1) show that the Renaissance idea of time, history, and narrative were much more encompassing than we tend to think; and 2) illustrate how Mantegna embraced Alberti's ideas of *historia* but also broadened its meaning by creating new

[48] Marilyn Aronberg Lavin *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches 431-1600* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
[49] Lavin, 5.

models.[50] The author wishes to prove that Mantegna was not only a close reader of Alberti's treatise but that his work reveals a deliberate response to Alberti's call for the artist to employ his *fantasia* and *inventio.* He also argues that Mantegna was thinking about narrative and time in the light of classical authors who were known to Alberti and Renaissance humanists. He points out that Renaissance historians developed their understanding of time (*tempus*) from the rhetorical strategies of ancient orators, for whom time was considered narrational, "that is, relative and multivalent, rather than absolute."[51] Time was seen as an entire chronological sequence: "as Quintilian put it, a description of the 'past, present [and] future' of the action under consideration."[52] Furthermore, the time related to an event depended, not solely upon date but "upon its various thematic (or causal) connections with various earlier and later events and upon the rhetorical significance with which it was invested by the historian."[53] Greenstein utilizes the example of Mantegna's earliest *Saint Sebastian* in Vienna to exhibit Mantegna's "deliberate and significant use of multiple time-frames within a single pictorial work." Through a very attentive reading of the image, Greenstein reveals multiple layers of time that suggest an implied narrative duration (or succession of events). He also identifies symbols and details that enhance the historicity of the event, both within its painted universe and in dialogue with the real world of the spectator.[54]

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[50] Jack M. Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
[51] Greenstein, 70.
[52] Greenstein, 70.
[53] Greenstein, 70-71.
[54] Mantegna's *St. Sebastian* has more the appearance of a devotional work than a narrative, the action of the narrative is latent, but it does exist in the details if one looks hard enough. The Praetorian archers who fired their arrows are not placed—where we might expect them—outside the pictorial frame, in the shared

The Renaissance focus on time is one of the themes of Simona Cohen's 2014 publication, *Transformations of Time and Temporality in Medieval and Renaissance Art*. Cohen—who also recognizes the lacuna in art historical scholarship regarding notions of time and temporality in Renaissance art—is not concerned with depiction of temporal breadth or narrative continuity in the pictorial arts. Rather Cohen's book examines time as a subject of art and iconographical nuances of depictions of time (*e.g*. symbols of time, personifications of Time, and instruments to measure the passing of time in medieval and Renaissance artwork). Cohen's goal is to trace the "dynamic concepts of time and temporality in Medieval and Renaissance art in speculative, ecclesiastical, socio-political, propagandistic, moralistic and poetic concepts."[55]

Cohen begins her study by tracing the philosophical understandings the dynamic of time from the pre-Socratic philosophers (Heraclitus and the continuity of his unending his river of time), to the Pythagoreans who saw time as predictable and cyclical like the seasons and the planetary orbits, from Plato who maintained that time came into existence along with the heavens, to Aristotle who equated the origins of time to the origins of motion. Cohen notes that it was not until the late Roman era, with Ovid, that time is vilified as *tempus edax rerum*, the devourer of all things. Ovid's definition of

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space of the spectator; instead, they have already left the scene of the crime. We see them, deep in the background, with bow in hand along the road that leads back to an ancient city. The details of the picture help to create an implied timeline: there are details indicative of past events (the sentencing and the attempted execution of the saint), which lead to the present moment in which we see the suffering of the saint. Lacking, however, are any overt indications of future events, although there may be subtle hints that allude symbolically to what is to come. Furthermore, Greenstein has factored in the trailing and spatter of the blood as an indicator of duration. Reading the pattern of the arrows as a suggestion of the semi-circular positioning of the archers, the author also judges the order in which the shots were fired based on the amount of blood loss: the longer the stream of blood, the earlier the arrow would have penetrated the flesh.

[55] Simona Cohen, *Transformations of Time and Temporality in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 2.

time as the destroyer puts the passage of time in context with human existence, with our transient nature.

The author notes that, in the classical period, many personifications of Time could be found: from Chronos, Aion and Phanes in Greek art, to Saturn and Janus in Roman art. She also notes the sheer lack of time symbolism in the Middle Ages, which she describes as inextricably linked to the Christian concept of linear time, with a precise beginning and end: the A and Ω. She cites images of Christ as Cosmocrator (master of the cosmos, and therefore time) shown at the center of a symbolic universe, controlling the passage of time as an example of such linear medieval imagery. Cohen also observes that in the Middle Ages there was a non-historical approach to typological themes. She writes, "The interrelation between the two testaments was neither causal nor evolutionary (...) Christianity assumedly proclaimed the uniqueness of each event involving Christ. (...) The value of the *exemplum* lay in its symbolic significance, not its historic function."[56] If the Middle Ages saw the typological similarities as only symbolic, the Humanist notion of historicity (in mankind's quest to understand its role and place in history) may have interpreted the connection as causal, or as the cyclical predictable nature of time, considered by the ancients.[57]

Cohen's books focuses predominately on influx on time-related images that arrive during the Quattrocento, when time was no longer considered merely a theological or

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[56] Cohen, 42.

[57] As seen, for example, in the typological parallel noted in Fra Angelico's Cortona altarpiece, where the Annunciation and the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden are very purposefully placed within the same context, the one a sort of hyper-text to the other. The pairing underscores not only the connection between the two events, but also the cyclical nature of time, as well as the correction or perfection of the New Testament example.

philosophical construct. Time in the Renaissance became the property of social and political realities.[58] The radical shift in the understanding of time and society's interest in the measurement of time is tied to the new mercantile economy, where the schedules of orders, consignments and payments must be respected. Within the humanist movement the classical notions of time were being rediscovered in ancient texts. As Richard Quinones stated:

> For the men of the Renaissance, time is a great discovery—the antagonist against which they plan and plot. (...) Time was not plentiful but rare and precious. Since it was constantly slipping away, man must utilize available means of controlling it and, in some measure, ward off the termination it promoted."[59]

Seizing hold of the *hic et nunc* and utilizing one's time to its full potential becomes a Renaissance code of conduct. Leaving one's mark on history for the sake of posterity is also great concern in the Renaissance. Certainly many of the artists are concerned with fame, but there are parallels to be drawn also with patronage and the temporal implications involved with including your image in artwork you commission (see the discussion of the Sassetti Chapel in Chapter Three).

Cohen and others have shown that Italian Renaissance culture—the Quattrocento culture in particular—had a certain fascination and fear of time and its passing. Indications of passing time, impending mortality and the desire to leave one's mark were represented in the artwork of the period.[60] While the examples presented in Cohen's

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[58] Cohen, 115-116.
[59] Ricardo Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972) 7-8.
[60] We are reminded of the *memento mori* beneath Masaccio's *Trinity* that warns, "*io fui già quel che voi siete e quel ch'io son voi ancor sarete*" (I was once that which you are and that which I am you will yet become).

work speak of time as a concept or a symbol, they do not address temporal duration, as in, the chain of events in a story. Scholars such as Lew Andrews and Marilyn Lavin, on the other hand, have looked at the storytelling capacities of continuous narratives and sequential cycles of frescoes, read through the consideration of their spatial arrangements and reading orders. The repetitions of the continuous narrative, as well as the frame by frame layout of a narrative sequence convey the idea of a chain of events, despite whether its order is linear or not.

There is, however, a gap in the research regarding the implied temporal unfolding that could be represented in pictorial narratives. On the surface, they may appear to represent a single fixed moment in a story. Closer inspection, as I will show, can often reveal that such images reference more than a single discrete instant, and may in fact imply a narrative development. To my knowledge, the field of art history has not yet systematically considered the variety of means by which images that are not continuous narratives (i.e. images that do not repeat the main characters) translated or imitated the temporal continuity of an event (a story, an episode) into a pictorial rendering. There are case studies which have made significant contributions regarding how specific paintings and sculptures suggest a non-synchronicity of action, a temporal continuity, or an evolution of the narrative. Among some of those that I will discuss are Leo Steinberg's reading of Leonardo's *Last Supper* in Chapter Four, and Ralph Lieberman's insight on Michelangelo's *Bacchus* in Chapter Five.

The present seeks to demonstrate that even apparently "fixed moments" in paintings could suggest a sense of narrative duration and development, disproving the

long-standing notion that a painting can only offer a single *punctum temporis.* By no means does it attempt to seek out every possible polynarrative example, nor will it identify every temporal mode. What it does hope to accomplish is to open an avenue of inquiry regarding how we read art and interact with it. Furthermore, by means of the various the case studies I will present, I hope to demonstrate that fifteenth and sixteenth-century artists and audiences were accustomed to a wide variety of temporal expressions. This variety of temporal modes flourished simultaneously and could even be seen side by side, within a single project, underscoring the fact that the Renaissance conceptions of narrative and narrativity, of time and temporality were not only broader that they have often been given credit, but they were most likely chosen to achieve a desired visual, iconographical or didactic effect.

Chapter One examines some examples of literary descriptions of artwork in the artistic theories of Alberti, but also in the writings of Ghiberti and the poetry of Dante. While the works described by Alberti and Dante describe artwork that may or may not have ever existed, Ghiberti's reference his own existing works. Among other things, the written descriptions of the artwork convey the essential role of the spectator as mediator of meaning. As with a text, the narrative "magic" of an image occurs through the audience's reading of it. Particular attention will be given to the *Calumny of Apelles,* Alberti's prime example of a *historia.* Though not *per se* a narrative, the image described relates an evolving story propelled by active allegorical figures. This leads to a digression on Late Gothic allegories, and how, they become progressively similar to a textual narrative in terms how they unfold before their intended audiences. Returning to literary

descriptions we will examine Ghiberti's own account of his baptistery doors contained in his *Commentarii.* Finally, this first chapter addresses Dante's ekphrasis of the relief panels on the terrace of Pride and how they propose compositions that are not temporally tied to a single *punctum temporis,* and that may serve as iconographical models.

Chapter Two addresses the evolution of Annunciation iconography in search of an image that adequately represents the collapsed narrative Dante describes in *Purgatory* Canto 10. The most worthy candidate is Giotto's *Scrovegni Annunciation*. This innovative image will also be discussed in the context of its location in the Arena Chapel. Finally, we will briefly discuss the dramatic increase in iconographical variations on the theme of Annunciation over the course of the Quattrocento.

Chapter Three examines another popular Marian theme, the Nativity narratives. We will trace the continuous narratives of the Byzantine tradition that combined the several episodes of the Nativity to the Late Gothic and early Renaissance period when they were generally divided between either the account in the Book of Luke (the Nativity and the Adoration of the Shepherds), or the account in the Book of Matthew (the Journey and Adoration of the Magi). The focus of the chapter is on Ghirlandaio's Sassetti Chapel *Adoration of the Shepherds*. The image ingeniously and seamlessly combines different texts and temporally distinct events in a singular expression, while still succeeding in implying an order of events. Since this altarpiece still adorns its original location, we will also examine it in dialogue with the decorative program of the chapel.

The immediacy of the scene and the vivacity of the apostles have encouraged many spectators and scholars to tie the action of Leonardo's *Last Supper* to a precise

moment of the gospel narrative. The work of Leo Steinberg has been fundamental in debunking the temporal specificity of this notion of "the moment" as a specific *punctum temporis*. Furthermore, he shows that there is no one specific gospel text that adequately and fully describes the action of the scene. In Chapter Four, I will take this argument a step further and posit that Leonardo, very much in the role of visual editor, devises his own interpretation and intertextual weave of the four eye-witness accounts, thereby creating a sort of multi-punctual image—one that simultaneously illustrates several narrative moments that progress over time and bleed into one another as "*le cose naturali*."

Chapter Five begins with a virtual meeting of the minds as we explore the battle scene commissioned to Michelangelo and Leonardo for the Great Council Hall in Palazzo della Signoria. It has been suggested by Cecil Gould others that both battles probably would have combined several discrete moments of their respective battles into unified pictorial spaces. We can also see from the fragments remaining of Michelangelo's *Bathers* that, like Leonardo's *Last Supper*, he may have sought to meld various temporal moments together but with a temporal flow that appears to quicken and stall intermittently across the composition. Perhaps more than any other artist of his age, Michelangelo seemed to understand the significance of portraying psychologically and physically intense moments at their tipping points, summoning the attention and the participation of the viewer. We will examine several of his works to see the variety of ways in which Michelangelo's art transcends temporal fixedness. In this chapter we will explore his capacity to create his own narratives from non-narrative subject matter, such

as in his *Doni Tondo*, *Taddei Tondo* and the *Bacchus*. But we will also explore his attempt to achieve the sublime atemporality of the vision of God in the *Last Judgment*.

Chapter 1: Visualizing Narrative

The enduring doctrine set by nineteenth-century aesthetic philosophers that the visual arts could or should represent only one specific *punctum temporis* has continued to influence the discourse of art history to this day. The fact is, however, that paintings and sculptures are not candid snapshots but highly constructed compositions, representing narratives of historical and literary events that unfold over time. By imposing a temporal stasis on painting and sculpture, these philosophers validated the foundational principles of their Neoclassical aesthetics by conveniently transferring those same ideals upon early modern aesthetics. We must ask ourselves whether early modern artists conceived of narrative in the same manner. In order to try to answer these questions, it would be helpful to examine more closely Alberti's *De pictura* (as the first systematic theoretical treatise on early modern art) in search of prescriptive guidelines for narrative compositions (*istorie*), as well as for indications of any concerns or notions on his part regarding the representation of narrative time.

At no point in Book Two (the more technical part of the treatise) does Alberti provide any indications concerning how to imitate narrative texts or pictorially represent actions over time. Despite the contemporary popularity of continuous narrative compositions, Alberti neither discusses their artistic validity, nor does he cite any. However, an indirect nod of acceptance of the continuous narrative might be found in Alberti's dedicatory letter (of the vernacular translation) addressed to Brunelleschi, where, among the group of artist friends whom he considered the pioneers of an exciting new style of art, Alberti included only one painter: Masaccio.

The young artist's innovative *Tribute Money* (Figure 6) in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence (1425-27) exhibits many of same criteria that Alberti recommends for a proper *historia*. It observes a fixed-point perspective, represents life-like proportions, and contains a good variety of physiognomies and gestures. However, it also combines several distinct moments of the same story set within the context of its unified background. Alberti, who was quick to criticize his contemporaries for art he found distasteful, makes no mention of any opposition to Masaccio's frescoes. Instead, he places him among the company of men who were, in Alberti's opinion, "for every laudable enterprise in no way inferior to any of the ancients who gained fame in these arts."[61] Was Alberti tacitly condoning the continuous narrative, or were the Renaissance conceptions of pictorial narrative simply different than our modern ideas?

Nowhere in the treatise does Alberti provide a solid definition of a *historia;* he assumes his educated audience already understands the meaning of the term. He does, however, provide examples of several narrative images that he considers archetypes for various reasons. Much has been written on Alberti's use of this term as well as its implications in ancient and medieval sources, and although a clear consensus on his precise definition has never fully been established.[62] One thing is certain: for Alberti, the *historia* is the apex of artistic genres and should be the aspiration of every painter.

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[61] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, 34.

[62] Regarding Alberti's understand and definition of *historia*, see Anthony Grafton, "Historia and Istoria: Alberti's Terminology in Context," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, Vol. 8 (1999), 37-68; Chapter Two of Jack Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992; Yael Nadav-Manes, "The Nature of Historia in Leon Battista Alberti's De Pictura" *Forum Italicum: A Journal of Italian Studies,* vol. 40 no. 1 (March 2006), 8-21.

Indeed, the *historia* appears to be, in his opinion, the very purpose of painting: its aim, to both delight the eye and engage the mind.

To be clear, Alberti's *historia* is not necessarily what we might classify a narrative. His parameters for the successful composition for a *historia* are: the relationship between planes and surfaces (in order to create a realistic perspective); the correct proportions of bodies to their surroundings; the decorum and suitability of the figures to their setting; the proper amount of variety and copiousness (poses, figure types, expressions, details); and, finally, figures whose actions and expressions appropriately communicate their emotional and physical states. The examples used to prove his point are taken from among ancient works of art—many of which were known to him only through literary descriptions—with the exception of Giotto's mosaic, the *Navicella,* in St. Peter's basilica, praised for its portrayal and variety of convincing human emotions.

Among the ancient works that Alberti chose to cite as good models of *historiae*, the most relevant example, in terms of the artist's level of inventiveness in the manipulation of subject matter and composition, is Apelles' *Calumny,* for which only one ancient source exists: Lucian's essay *On Slander*. Employing the rhetorical device of ekphrasis, Lucian gives a detailed description of the work of art as well as the supposed real-life anecdote that inspired it. There is no evidence that Lucian ever saw Apelles' *Calumny*, or whether artist had actually ever painted it, but this is of little concern to Alberti's purpose in utilizing it as an example. Alberti clearly believed that Lucian's description of Apelles' composition was compelling enough to cite it in his own treatise on painting and utilize it as an ideal model of a *historia*. But what exactly is the purpose

of his mentioning the *Calumny* and, more importantly, how can it help us to establish Alberti's definition of *historia*?

Apelles' narrative, as it is reported by Lucian and reiterated by Alberti, is a not a true-to-life depiction of historical events, as they supposedly occurred. It is largely allegorical, yet not an entirely allegorical representation. Alberti's vision of the perfect *historia* is a hybrid of narrative and allegory. It is a narrative because it depicts a series of actions relating to historical events and people. However, in the *Calumny*, Apelles has replaced the historical protagonists with personifications of Vices and Virtues, who—through their actions and attitudes—represent a condensed and allegorical interpretation of the historical event. Alberti's choice of example is not extraordinary for the fact that the scene is an allegorical interpretation of the historical event, but rather for the way in which the actions are performed by the personified vices and virtues. Thus, the allegorical figures are the active participants that propel the narrative forward:

> …from one side Calumny was approaching in the form of an attractive woman, but whose face seemed too well versed in cunning, and she was holding in her left hand a lighted torch, while with her right she was dragging by the hair a youth with his arms outstretched towards heaven. Leading her was another man [Envy] pale, ugly, and fierce to look upon […] there are two other women attendant on Calumny and busy arranging their mistress's dress; they are Treachery and Deceit…[63]

The personifications of Ignorance and Suspicion whisper into the overly large ears of a seated official. Presumably—though Alberti avoids transcribing the interpretive commentary of Lucian—they are encouraging the slanderous accusations of Calumny who, led by Envy, drags Innocence by the hair. Attending Calumny are Treachery and Deceit. Trailing behind are Repentance and finally Truth. The image does not

[63] Alberti, *On Painting*, III.53.

represent the "real" events as they took place. Lucian's explanation of the image, or rather that which one he is told, by a *cicerone* (a guide or interpreter), directly links the allegorical action of the *Calumny* to a supposed real-life event from the life of Apelles. As such, Lucian's description provides his reader with the origin, the history and the *raison d'être* of the composition. The microcosmic anecdote of Apelles is transformed into a macrocosmic Ideal: a philosophic interpretation of the dynamics and the consequences of slander. The action and vitality with which the author describes the painting brings the scene to life in front of our eyes. Even though no one—at least since antiquity—has ever seen Apelles' original masterpiece (if such a thing existed), the precision of the description allows us to formulate a fairly accurate image of the composition.

The version of the story cited by Alberti is drawn from Guarino Guarini's early Latin translation of Lucian's text.[64] The details of the historical anecdote, which were so purposefully reported by Lucian and translated by Guarini, are entirely omitted by Alberti, who limits himself to citing only that portion of the text concerning the description of the painting. But why? The exclusion of the biographical anecdote might suggest that: 1) it was extraneous to Alberti's use of the example (the *Calumny* as an exemplar of extraordinary artistic *inventio*); 2) that his own text presupposed a certain caliber of educated readers—and spectators—who were already familiar with Lucian's source text, and therefore, "how Apelles translated his peril into paint" (Lucian, *On Slander*); and/or 3) Alberti may have limited the quantity of background information in

[64] See Rudolph Altrocchi, "The Calumny of Apelles in the Literature of the Quattrocento," *PMLA*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Sep., 1921), 454-491.

order to allow the spectator, or in this case the reader, to formulate his or her own conclusions regarding the significance of the image.

The painting, as is it described in Lucian's original account, is a clever representation of the dangers of spreading false accusations. The composition was purportedly created by Apelles to represent the events linked to an alleged real-life event: the slandering of his name and reputation, by a jealous rival, to his patron and king. But rather than paint a particular moment of that individually specific and real-life event, Apelles, employing a keen sense of *inventio,* translated the consequences of such actions into a visual parable. Herein lies, in Alberti's opinion, the genius of a great artist and the definition of a sublime *historia.* The *Calumny* is a product of Apelles' intellectualization of history. What I mean to say is that, through a process of contemplation, the artist has succeeded in transforming and elevating the account of his own personal drama to a plane of ideas and ethics. Through the symbolic rendering of his personal incident, the enlightened artist has created a place for it in history. He has made it a worthy and 'teachable moment' by raising it to a philosophical level of significance. The intellect employed by the artist in the creative process, as well as a work's ability to "charm the eyes and minds" of active and informed spectators, constitute for Alberti a standard of excellence in art. It must "seize the imagination" and encourage the viewer to interpret and formulate his or her own moral commentary or significance.[65]

Key to understanding Alberti's idea of allegory is also identifying his ideal audience. One could argue that his treatise was written for artists—or certainly for a new

[65] Alberti, *On Painting*, III.40.

breed of artist—whose art, in Alberti's opinion, was to be as much an intellectual exercise as it was a mechanical practice. In Baxandall's view, Alberti is a "humanist writing for humanists," meaning that the majority of Quattrocento painters were not directly influenced by the theories of the *De pictura,* since they learned their craft mostly through apprenticeship and practice.[66] Rather, this treatise was intended principally for the enlightened patrons and their circles of humanist friends, for the employers of the artists and their advisors. In other words, Alberti's ideal reader and spectator is someone who can recognize the timelessness and universality of quality artwork; he is an educated spectator, a connoisseur and consumer of fine art, who recognizes not only the excellence of ancient art but also the talent and innovations of contemporary artists. Likewise, his ideal artist must be well-educated. A solid foundation in the liberal arts places him above the purely technical craftsman. By exercising his technical, scientific and literary knowledge, as well as through his intellectual relationships, the artist is better equipped to exercise his *inventio.* He is able to filter life's events into lasting and meaningful statements, or texts, in the manner of the poet and the philosopher. This is an important factor to keep in mind throughout the chapters ahead: the artist not as an illustrator, but as a composer of a visual narrative.

Book Three of Alberti's treatise centers, in fact, not on the *techne* of the painter but rather on the intellectual preparation and cultural milieu that should surround the artist. It is, thus, no coincidence that here we find his citation of the *Calumny,* employed to underscore the importance of *inventio* as the principal element of success in a *historia*

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[66] Baxandall, *Giotto & Orators Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 131-133.

since it adds an element to visual art that propels it beyond a merely literal representation or illustration of narrative events. Likewise, his definition of *historia* is underscored by allegory: a semiotic system derived through a process of philology, of reading, re-reading, contemplating, historicizing, parabolizing and gleaning the universal lessons from life events.

For Alberti's informed reader/spectator, the painting, like any other text, can be read on different levels of interpretation, which are simultaneously parallel and complex. It is, to quote Dante, "*polisensa*;" it has the quality of "being of more senses than one."[67] Alberti presumes that his audience knows the story of the slandering of the Apelles' good name. By citing only the Lucian's description of the images and not the explanation behind it, Alberti highlights the artist's *inventio*. Through his intellectual process Apelles filtered the historic events through a symbolic sieve and created an allegorical representation of the event, which better conveys the consequences of the actions, as well as the moral lesson. On the surface, the figures described may not seem even remotely connected to the "real" events, but symbolically and intellectually they represent an idealized image of Apelles' ordeal. From the point of view of the educated spectator, the

[67] Epistle to Cangrande dell Scala, 5. Although the authorship of the Epistle is still disputed, the supposed author of the letter is Dante Alighieri. The letter instructs on how to correctly read the Comedy on varying levels: *"7. Per chiarire quanto stiamo per dire, occorre sapere che non è uno solo il senso di quest'opera: anzi, essa può essere definita* polisensa*, ossia dotata di più significati. Infatti, il primo significato è quello ricavato da una lettura* alla lettera*; un altro è prodotto da una lettura che va al significato profondo. Il primo si definisce significato* letterale*, il secondo, di tipo* allegorico, morale *oppure* anagogico*."* (be it known that the sense of this work is not simple, but on the contrary it may be called *polysemous*, that is to say, 'of more senses than one'; for it is one sense which we get through the letter, and another which we get through the thing the letter signifies; and the first is called *literal*, but the second *allegorical, moral* or *mystic*).

Calumny of Apelles' should be considered simultaneously as both allegorical and historical, and perhaps even philosophical.

The allegory of the *Calumny* represents microcosmic "real" events viewed through the lens of macrocosmic hindsight and reflection. As such, it encompasses more than a single moment in time because it condenses a lengthy historical event into a unified composition. The slandering of Apelles did not happen in a single instant (*i.e.* Apelles cannot have received justice at the same moment the false accusations were made). We cannot know—nor is it important to know—how much time elapsed from start to finish, but we can imagine that the event took place at least over several days, if not weeks. The allegorical composition simultaneously depicts the beginning, middle and end of the event as one cohesive unit. The viewer is able to weave between the symbolic and the historic, to read backward and forward, to contemplate, interpret, reconsider and even interpret it on his/her own terms.

The revolutionary feature behind Alberti's candidate for an ideal *historia* is the fact that it fuses together allegory and narrative. The allegorical figures in the *Calumny of Apelles* are the protagonists of the story; they perform the actions and propel the narrative forward. In this sense, they are quite unlike medieval allegorical images, in which idly enthroned personifications of virtues and vices are employed—like the points of reference of a moral compass—to indicate the consequences of the actions and conduct of mankind. In such medieval allegories, the active "real world" of men and women is often detached or separate from the moral and philosophical world of reason as embodied in the allegorical figures. The particular event and the universal truth are

visually divorced from one another. In order to more fully understand the differences between the medieval allegory and Alberti's ideal *historia*, we will examine in the next section three allegorical images by three major artists operating in three artistic hubs of the Trecento: Giotto's *Franciscan Allegories* in the Lower Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi (1330s), Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegories and Effects of Good and Bad Government* in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena (1338-39), and Andrea Bonaiuti's *Allegory of the Church Militant* in the Spagnoli Chapel of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (ca. 1365).

Medieval allegories

In contrast to Alberti's *Calumny*, much medieval allegorical imagery treated the allegory and the action as separate entities. They often imply that the actions of an individual or a community are somehow guided, determined or judged by abstract forces that preside over them. Depending on the intended audience, the moral and theological messages of medieval allegories might be depicted in a highly cryptic manner for the indoctrinated audience, or arranged in more clear and easy-to-read formats for the unindoctrinated masses. Giotto's Franciscan *Allegory of Chastity* (
Figure **13)** in the Lower Church of San Francesco at Assisi is one such allegory; its meaning may have proved to be beyond the grasp of the ordinary viewer, but perhaps much clearer for those versed in Franciscan doctrine. The fresco is one of a group of four depicting the three Franciscan vows (Poverty, Chastity and Obedience) while the fourth is a *Glory of St Francis*.

The *Allegory of Chastity* hosts an array of figures, the majority being from among the ranks of the angels. On the left-hand side of the fresco, St. Francis and some of the angels welcome representatives of the three classes of the Franciscan order (a Franciscan friar, a Poor Clare and lay-brother) who have made the arduous climb to a hilltop, upon which stands a fortified castle. At the center of the scene, there is a baptismal font where angels are cleansing a newly arrived soul, while other angels await with fresh, spotless robes. Just above them, leaning over the battlements, with beckoning arms stretched toward the newly-bathed figure are the heavenly virtues Cleanliness *(MUNDITIA*) and Fortitude (*FORTITUDO*). Above them, under the white banner of Purity and the bell of Vigilance, we find Chastity (*CASTITAS*) in prayer, sealed within the tower of the castle and clearly marked by her name (

Figure **14**). Attending her are angels holding a gold crown encrusted with jewels and a vase of greenery, perhaps palm-fronds. Protecting the fortified castle, there are warrior-like, armor-clad angels, equipped with shields and scourges. To the right-hand side of the fresco, a hooded angel armed with a scourge, marked Penitence (*PENITENTIA*), chases grotesque figures labeled, Uncleanliness (*IMMUNDITIA*), Earthly Love (*AMOR*), Desire (*ARDOR*) and Death (*MORS*) into an abyss. The allegorical figures represent abstract virtues and vices and are, therefore, are depicted differently than the saints, angels and humans. Aside from their written identification, the vices are depicted as vile hybrid creatures, while virtues are human in form. Giotto has given the virtues the distinction of

hexagonal halos (reserved for personified virtues) to differentiate them from saints and angels who have traditional circular halos.

One of the difficulties in reading this image is the lack of any clear narrative. The abstract notions in the image are completely divorced from the specificity of any particular event or recognizable source text. The scene takes place on a remote and otherworldly hilltop. In a way it is reminiscent of the Purgatorial summit in Dante—where one must bathe first in the Lethe, then in the Eunone, to be cleansed of evil and prepared for entering Eden—but the image does not convey such a story. The composition does not explain the journey to arrive at such a place, nor the rewards for those admitted to the fortress; it only hints at the effects of being either welcomed or cast from the realm of spiritual cleanliness. The allegorical figures do not interact with the human figures, with the narrow exception of, perhaps, Fortitude and Cleanliness, who reach their arms toward the man being bathed (Cleanliness extends a white flag of Purity toward the man). They do not, however, take an active role in washing him. The man does not acknowledge their presence, but the act of his being bathed seems to have drawn their attention. The allegorical figure of Penitence does not chase away unchaste men and women, but he casts out the personification of Spiritual Death and the other mortal vices that would threaten Chastity. With so many, apparently unrelated events and no clear narrative path, the image is rather unsuccessful in clearly stating its purpose. The message of this allegory appears overtly doctrinal and ideological: intended for an audience indoctrinated under the Franciscan model, rather than for a general public.

Similarly, the *Allegory of Obedience* (Figure 15) and the *Allegory of Poverty* (Figure 16) are equally as cryptic and non-narrative but with a few variations. In the *Allegory of Obedience*, the personifications of Prudence (*PRUDENTIA*), Obedience (*OBEDIENTIA*) and Humility *(HUMILITAS*) exercise their influence over the obedient, who kneel and patiently await their turn—though for what purpose is not entirely clear. The elderly and winged Obedience actively places the yoke of compliance on the shoulders of a dutiful monk, while two-faced Prudence scrutinizes his past and present and Humility observes his submissive pose. Like the *Chastity* fresco, the virtues are distinguished by their polygonal halos and by their identifications written behind them, but in contrast we see that, here, the virtues do act upon with the human figures in a slightly more direct manner. Representing a force of opposition to the virtues is a centaur that represents Pride, Impetuosity (he attempts to enter the chapel but is barred by an angel) and Irrationality (more beast than man). Behind them, on the frescoed wall of the chapel-like structure, we see the torso of a Crucified Christ symbolizing the model of Obedience. Around them angels attend the scene. Besides the willful acceptance of a vow, or perhaps judgment for having honored the vow, there is no narrative: nothing that indicates prior or subsequent actions.

In the *Allegory of Poverty* (Figure 16), rather than a generic figure in the principal action, St. Francis himself plays the protagonist. He is joined with Lady Poverty (*PAUPERTAS*) in a marriage celebrated by Christ. From their union, the trees and a white lily flower behind them. Witnessing the ceremony are angels and the theological virtues Hope (*SPES*), who offers a ring, and Charity (*KARITAS*), a heart. The virtuous souls, as in the

other allegories, are represented by human figures. On the left, a young man representing the humility and charity of St. Francis is seen removing his cloak to give it to a poor man in rags. Countering his generous and selfless act, are Pride, Envy, and Greed, which, in contrast to the other allegories, are not portrayed by beasts but by human figures. Three men in fine clothing (Figure 18) refuse the angel's invitation to participate in the wedding scene. Two are clutching their heavy purses tightly, while the other, a young aristocrat with a falcon on his glove and a jeering expression, offends the angel by giving him the "fig." This crude hand gesture is reminiscent of a similar gesture made by the covetous and prideful thief, Vanni Fucci, in Canto XXV of the *Inferno*.[68] Two children with a barking dog also ridicule Poverty by goading her with thorns and throwing stones.

Of the three allegories, the *Allegory of Poverty* is perhaps the strongest, in the sense that it is the easiest to interpret, even for the layperson. This is certainly, and in no small part due to an increased amount of action taking place, but also to the gestures and expressions that help the viewer recognize and deduce the outcomes. Furthermore, the use of humans as examples of the vices is more meaningful for the spectator. Instead of representing the ugliness of the vice with a beastly form, they demonstrate the vice through their actions and their gestures, in a similar way to how Apelles' personifications perform the action of the Calumny narrative. In contrast, however, Giotto's allegories do not take a narrative and elevate it to a more intellectual level, in fact, there is no story being told, no literal interpretation. Despite the presence of St. Francis in all four scenes,

[68] Dante, *Inf*erno, 25.1-3: *Al fine de le sue parole il ladro / le mani alzò con amendue le fiche,/ gridando: "Togli, Dio, ch'a te le squadro*!" (Then, making the figs with both his thumbs, / the thief raised up his fists and cried: / 'Take that, God! It's aimed at you!').

these are not specific moments of his life story. They represent the ideals toward which the Franciscans strive: their religious vows, therefore the images remain on a symbolic level, representing the dichotomy of good and evil, of vice and virtue.

An example of a secular work that also represents the forces of good and evil, but that convey its message in a clearer way is Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegories and Effects of Good and Bad Government* (Figure 18- Figure 22) in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico (1338-1340). In these allegories, the utopian and dystopian effects of the influences of both positive and negative leadership are depicted to remind public officials and citizens of their civic responsibilities. Like puppet masters pulling the strings of the citizens, on either side the symbolic personifications of the Virtues of Good and the Evils of Bad Government preside over the city. With invisible forces, they exert their respective influences on the citizenry, but they do so passively, not interacting with them directly, nor acting on their behalf. Unlike the real elected officials, who are also depicted, they remain physically separated and emotionally detached from the city and her citizens.

The allegorical figures (Figure 18) are merely emblematic; each is labeled with their title and depicted with his or her attributes, but they do not perform any clear narrative action. That is not to say that the painting is devoid of activity. The townspeople can be seen performing a number of random productive and destructive activities, but there is no obvious narrative thread that links these activities to one another. In the *Effects of Good Government* (Figure 19*)*, there is an overarching sense of harmony: a mix of social classes, each diligently and willingly performing its duties. There are busy shopkeepers tending to their clients, carpenters building, young girls

dancing, young boys learning, and there are peasants working the fields while others go to the city to sell their wares. The element that unites the array of activities is the benevolent presence of *Securitas,* a direct consequence of proper governing (Figure 20). Our educated assumption, as well as the various *cartigli* and inscriptions, tell the viewer that these actions are the effects, caused by the very explicit forces of good presiding over the city.

As in Giotto's *Franciscan Allegories*, here too, there are very few points of interaction between the allegorical figures and the "real" figures, although in a few instances we can see some interaction between the winged messengers and the townspeople. Despite this lack of active interfacing between the allegorical figures and the townspeople, the personifications still function as the passive source of the action: the cause of the good and bad actions of the humans. Although there is no true sense of narrative, the message—unlike Giotto's allegories—is blatantly clear: when evil and tyranny rule, the city and its people suffer, but when governed by the virtuous, there is peace and prosperity for all.

The iconography is modeled on the standard medieval hierarchies of holy figures: the polar opposites of the benevolent God-like lawgiver and Satanesque emperor (respectively, the City of Siena and Tyranny) are the largest, followed by the personified vices/virtues (similar to the saints in their arrangement), and finally, the angel-like vices/virtues. In comparison, the townspeople are minuscule and completely subjected to the passive influence inflicted upon them by these higher beings. The directionality of how one reads the two images is also in opposition. The representatives of Good

Government sit to the proper right of the industrious and productive urban and rural landscapes that it influences. It follows the orthodox manner of reading a text: from left to right, first we see the Virtues, then the city and countryside over which they rule. Bad Government is arranged in mirror opposition (Figure 21-Figure 22): first the war-torn countryside, then the crime-ridden city, and finally, the ruling vices. In this order, the devastating effects of corruption are awkwardly positioned before the cause, adding to the perversion of the image.

Much like the black and white Sienese flag, these images work on a very clear binary system of good and evil that was not uncommon in medieval artwork. The examples of Giotto, similarly presented the viewer with these dichotomies of moral and immoral exempla, always placing the good on the proper right of the composition and the evil example on the sinister left. Nonetheless, neither Giotto nor Lorenzetti's allegories recount any specific story. Because of the clear iconography, the labels, the inscriptions and the general juxtaposition of the images, the viewer is well equipped to construct the moral and ethical narrative of Lorenzetti's allegories and their effects. But these do not represent explicit moments of the history of Siena; instead, they represent the extreme outcomes of utopian and dystopian potential. Their purpose appears more prophetic than narrative; they clearly demonstrate the reward for good conduct and the punishment for bad conduct, without reference to any specific historical, biblical or literary examples.

Andrea Bonaiuti's frescoes in the Spanish Chapel of Santa Maria Novella take a more ambitious approach toward creating a comprehensive history of the triumphs of the Dominican order. Painted between 1365-68, the three frescoed walls of the chapel

represent: on the South Wall, a continuous cycle of scenes of the Passion of Christ (*Calvary*, the *Crucifixion* and the *Harrowing of Hell*), on the West wall the *Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas*, celebrating the academic and theological contributions of the order, and on the East wall, the *Via Veritatis* or *Allegory of the Church Militant.* In the sails of the vaulting above, there are scenes of the *Ascension,* the *Resurrection*, the *Pentecost*, and an interpretation of Giotto's *Navicella.* The South wall is clearly a continuous narrative, and therefore is beyond the scope of this study. The West wall is a sort of schematic idealized family portrait—of Saints, Evangelists, Prophets and the personifications of the Virtues and Liberal Arts—that represents a genealogy of the Dominican ideologies, and is therefore not a narrative. I would call our attention, however, to the fresco on the East wall, which has been known by many names: the *Allegory of the Church Militant*, as well as the *Allegory of the Church Triumphant.* More recently, it has been referred to as the *Way of Salvation,* or *Via Veritatis*.[69] The reason for such a variety of titles is perhaps linked to the encyclopedic nature of the subject matter. Although no specific narrative is immediately evident, the composition attempts to combine several images depicting both real and allegorical events to commemorate the Dominican order, but also its role and responsibility in the history of the Church.

The long and winding composition is appropriate for this *Path to Salvation* (Figure 23). It not only mimics the itinerant preaching of the friars, it also conducts the

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[69] Joseph Polzer, "Andrea di Bonaiuto's Via Veritatis and Dominican Thought in Late Medieval Italy," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Jun., 1995), 27.1; see also Johannes Tripps, *Tendencies of Gothic in Florence: Andrea Bonaiuti*, Volume 7, Part 1. (Florence: Giunti, 1996); John White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 563-566; K. Steinweg, Andrea Bonaiuti, in *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting*: sec. 4, vol. VI, (New York, 1979); .Meiss, M., *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

viewer on a sort of Purgatorial climb: a visual journey through the history of the Church and the major contributions of the Dominican order. Beginning in the lower left hand corner we see a visual representation of the Church community in all its levels of stratification. A model of the completed Florence cathedral—which at the time of the fresco was under construction and, of course, lacked a dome—serves as an iconic symbol of the *Ecclesia*. At the very center sits the pope with his shepherd's crook and symbolic flock of sheep at his feet. His position at the center of the church is reminiscent of the screens that divided the public and private space of contemporary medieval churches. In fact, as pontiff and supreme leader of the Church, he serves as the bridge between the temporal and ecclesiastical powers that form the upper echelons of the hierarchical order of earthly society.[70] To the right of the pope, extending toward the apse—and therefore the private space of the church—we see a Dominican cardinal (a prince of the church) wearing a wide-brimmed red *galero,* followed by a bishop. They are surrounded by the lower members of the ecclesiastical community: friars, nuns, priests, and lesser clergy. To the left of the pope and extending toward the façade of the church (the public space) we see the temporal leaders, the emperor, a king and a prince. They are flanked by the stratification of lay society: noblemen and knights, a scholar holding a book, the merchant class, a group of women and finally the lower ranks of society: the poor and the crippled.

Much like Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*, there is a dais upon which the ruling class is seated. But quite the opposite of Lorenzetti, these rulers are

[70] Polzer, 268.

not allegorical personifications, but rather representations of the real temporal and spiritual leaders, whose first duty is to God, then to country and fellow man. Beyond the protection of the Church and her redeeming way of life, on the lower right-hand side of the fresco, the Dominican founding fathers are hard at work (Figure 24). St. Dominic symbolically commands his loyal black and white *domini canes* (dogs of the Lord) to ravage the heretical wolves that attempt to attack the faithful flocks.[71] St. Peter Martyr enacts this pastoral mission through his verbal preaching to the heretics—some of whom appear very resistant.[72] St. Thomas Aquinas does the same by means of his writing (he holds a copy of his *Summa theologica*). Unlike the manipulated actions of the townspeople in the Lorenzetti frescos, the actions of these friars are performed out of individual volition and purpose, and are symbolic of their educational and missionary roles in the history of the order.

The intermediate level is more complex in its symbolic content and requires perhaps a more enlightened or indoctrinated level of interpretation. The gently sloping rise of this intermediary level has an otherworldly, almost Edenic or purgatorial nature, such as we saw in Giotto's *Allegory of Chastity*. To the right seven girls are dancing; they are grouped together by four dancing in a circle and three in a line. They are accompanied by: another girl playing a tambourine, a tall youth playing a bagpipe and two more youths that watch from the side. This has been interpreted by some art historians as a display of the dangers indulging in mortal pleasures.[73] I would read this in

[71] Polzer, 268.
[72] Polzer, 268-69.
[73] Polzer, p 271.

a slightly different manner. The girls are dancing in harmony, and not in any lascivious manner; they do not appear as anything sinful or errant. A similar group of dancing girls can be seen in Lorenzetti's *Effects of Good Government* as a symbol of civic harmony and the pursuit of happiness. Given their groupings, the girls might also represent the four cardinal and three theological virtues. In fact, the group of three are wearing the symbolic colors white (Faith), green (Hope) and red (Charity). The boys who are loitering there, watching them, may represent the need—on the path to salvation—to enact these virtues: to observe them not only with their eyes, but in their hearts. Just behind them, one boy is being led away, rather reluctantly, from the dance by another young girl, perhaps Constancy or Diligence, to begin the active life in the garden.

The Edenic garden is teeming with (God's) children, who are busy harvesting and partaking of the Good fruit growing on the trees —as opposed to Eden's Forbidden fruit. The Good fruit might be read as the product of the Dominican's policy of education, their eradication of heresy and their itinerant preaching to disseminate their pastoral message. At the center, an elderly man receives absolution from a Dominican friar, while another group of men await their turn in line, with eyes fixed upon the heavenly gates. Behind the newly-absolved man, St. Dominic himself, with arms outstretched, invites the man to move toward the gates of Heaven, where St. Peter and the angels are welcoming a group of children dressed in communion white and wearing garlands of white flowers on their heads. The color they wear symbolizes purity, and their youth may represent Innocence or their rebirth, after death, into the realm of the saved. Beyond the Heavenly gates, an array of saints and martyrs, the elect, stand together with their eyes set on final Salvation:

on Christ in Revelation, flanked by the Virgin Queen to his right and by an army of angels on either side.

There are four additional figures in the middle section that require further examination (Figure 25). Their prominent size dictates that they carry a certain amount of importance, likewise their demeanor and attributes suggest that they may be allegorical, but what do they represent in terms of this history of the order? These figures, two female and two male, are seated side by side on a long bench, directly behind the *cattedra* of the Dominican granting absolution. They are also placed above—but clearly separate from—the seven dancing girls. The first female plays a stringed instrument; the second figure is a male with a conical hat and a falcon on his arm; the third is woman with a small dog in her lap; and the fourth is a man caught deep in thought with a classical expression of pensiveness. Their significance has proved elusive. Millard Meiss recognized a precedent: a grouping of similar figures in a courtly scene in the lower left-hand corner in the *Triumph of Death* (Figure 26) in the Camposanto of Pisa (1330s).[74] In this earlier fresco, there is also a woman with a dog, men with falcons, a woman with a thoughtful expression and other figures playing musical instruments. The atmosphere of the courtly scene in Pisa, however, is clearly a more realistic: a sensual and joyous representation of life. The figures engage with one another and are clearly enjoying their music and conversation. An interpretation proposed by Joseph Polzer suggests that the varying ages of the figures in Andrea Bonaiuti's *Via Veritatis* may be a nod to Dante's

[74] Millard Meiss, "The Problem of Francesco Traini," *The Art Bulletin*, xv (1933), 170.

categorization of the principle virtues of the four ages of man put forth in the *Convivio*.[75] Polzer sees *adolescentia* in the young woman playing the musical instrument, *gioventute* as represented by the two figures seated in the center, *senectute* in the pensive figure seated to the right, and finally *senio* in the elderly figure, to the left kneeling for absolution. I am not sure I agree completely with his analysis. If we are to identify the four allegorical figures as Dante's four ages of man, I do not see why *senio* must be kept apart from such a clearly detached group, nor do I fully understand how the four ages of man directly relate to Dominican Doctrine, besides the notion that these lessons must be observed throughout the course of one's lifetime.

I would interpret these figures rather as virtues of conduct valued by the Dominican Order for the common good. The woman playing the stringed instrument may represent Concordia, one of the civic virtues stressed in fourteenth-century Dominican homiletic literature.[76] The falcon is often seen as a symbol of Obedience, which is not only one of the evangelical vows of the order, but also a civic virtue for man to be obedient to both his spiritual and temporal leaders.[77] The woman's lapdog can be read as a symbol of Fidelity both to God, Church and family. Finally the pensive man

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[75] "The poet divides human life into four successive periods: *adolescentia, gioventute, senectute,* and *senio*. The first, *adolescentia*, lasts to the twenty-fifth year as the body attends to growth and attractiveness. In *gioventute*, the second phase, reaching up to the age of forty-five, man achieves his highest development; this phase spans the ideal age of man, which is thirty-three, that of Christ at his death. The principal virtues of *gioventute* are temperance, strength, love, courtliness, and loyalty-all necessary for mortal perfection. *Senectute*, which follows, ends in the seventieth year, and is devoted to prudence, justice, largesse, praise, and affability. The last phase, *senio*, addresses the spiritual as man prepares for the soul's return to God and is thankful for a long life about to end." Polzer, p. 281.

[76] See Cecilia Iannella, "Civic Virtues in Dominican Homiletic Literature in Tuscany in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries." *Medieval Sermon Studies*. Vol. 51 (2007), 22-32.

[77] In the *Commedia,* Dante uses an array of falconry similes and imagery to refer to the obedient and the faithful souls that return to God, their master. The young, delinquent noble with the falcon in Giotto's *Allegory of Poverty*(Figure 18) could be seen as an example of misplaced obedience or loyalty to temporal pursuits and earthly wealth.

may be a symbol of Contemplation, a reminder that prayer and devotion is both active and contemplative. These considerations would of course require further investigation, but they might prove to be plausible interpretations of key virtues one must observe along the path to Salvation, which—as in the lower half of the painting—symbolize good conduct across the civic, secular, monastic and spiritual realities.

The diminished emphasis on the role of the allegorical figures renders Andrea Bonaiuti's allegory different from those of his contemporaries discussed here. The human figures appear to exercise their free will and act either in accordance with or against the influential direction of their spiritual and temporal leaders. They have a certain degree of agency; they are able to express their own desires and also to suffer the consequences. The path to salvation can be undertaken with the guidance of the Dominican system of beliefs, but in and of itself, this guidance is not sufficient. In order to stay on the path to Salvation, one must choose to work at it; one must be diligent and stay on track, climb the trees and help gather the good fruit. The lower half of the painting exhibits this more clearly. The civic and spiritual obedient are protected by the shadow of the Catholic community (the Church), as well as their appointed civic and religious rulers. Beyond the protection of the church, heretics, who have consciously chosen a different path, debate and argue with the Dominican elite over doctrine. By means of their gestures we are able to read that, some of the heretics—influenced by the rhetorical skills of St. Peter Martyr and the rational truth of Thomas Aquinas—choose to return to the flock (Figure 24). To the far left, some of the heretics can be seen tearing apart their books, or kneeling in reverence; they are consciously taking the first steps to

return to the path of Salvation. The gestures of some indicate that considerate thought is being given to the words of the Dominicans, while the gestures of others indicate a staunch refusal of the Dominican doctrine. There are no explicit allegorical virtues and vices exercising control over these heretics; any such abstract forces are purely implicit.

The very lucid binary system of good and evil, seen in the examples of Giotto and Lorenzetti, are less evident in Bonaiuti. Besides the symbolism of the dogs protecting the lambs from the wolves, the heretics are not depicted as evil, hybrid beasts. They are not being tortured, shunned or cast into any abyss. The symbolism in the lower half of the painting, of the Church as an institution and of the role of saints Dominic, Peter and Thomas, is more easily understood through the placement, the actions, and the gestures of the figures. The intermediary level is a bit more cryptic, or even propagandistic, touting the role of the Dominicans in their guidance of the obedient to absolution and Salvation. Andrea Bonaiuti combines some historical fact (the lives and teaching of these saints) with a prophetic conclusion for the Christian society that follows the path prepared by the Dominicans. In comparison to the works of Giotto and Lorenzetti, examined above, the *Via Veritatis* similarly exhibits the potential outcomes of a set of variables, but it does so not only through allegorical, but also through the use of history. Like Giotto's *Allegory of Chastity,* Bonaiuti's *Via Veritatis* does not spell out in deliberate terms precisely what proper conduct entails. That responsibility, it seems, is relinquished to the Dominican brethren, whose mission it is to educate the flocks. The duty of the flock is to follow, but not to question. The symbolic wolves in the act of being ravaged by the hounds of the Lord, tell the story of those who disobey or question religious dogma.

Returning for a moment to Alberti, how do these examples of medieval allegories compare to his use of allegory and his model of *historia?* One of the major distinctions in the fourteenth-century works is that allegory, as we have seen, is employed differently. The actions represented in these pictures do not significantly contribute to the creation of a coherent narrative; they appear disconnected from one another, co-existing as separate entities. The medieval allegories tend to exhibit the outcomes of predetermined actions inflicted upon the actors by uncontrollable abstract forces, but they do not show the processes behind such outcomes. They tend to divide the ethical nature of the actions into just two camps: good and bad. There are no gray areas, no "what if's." In order to arrive at those processes and decipher the allegorical meaning, the spectator must try to reverse engineer the outcomes, and, in many cases, because of the absence of a specific narrative or source text that might aid the viewer in deciphering the visual text, the mediation of an indoctrinated interpreter may be a necessary recourse.

Alberti, on the other hand, recognizes that allegory can create and propel the action. The action of the event is in the process of unfolding; its outcome has not yet been determined. It is the work of the problem-solving spectators to utilize their gifts of observation, intellectual dexterity, knowledge of human nature, as well as their ability to interpret gestures, emotions and actions, to unscramble the clues and infer the past, read the present and predict the outcome of the narrative. An image as complex as the *Calumny* does not offer a simple black or white solution; it holds much gray area in terms of interpretive possibilities. Consequently, the source text becomes an important tool

which can be used to unlock its symbolism, allowing the informed viewer to engage with the image on a higher intellectual plane.

Word and image

The *Calumny of Apelles* exists in the texts of Lucian and Alberti, not in a physical art form. It is, as James Heffernan commented, "inescapably bound to words."[78] The description, even without the physical representation, is evocative enough that we can formulate an image in our head. In fact Alberti asks his readers: "if this '*historia*' seizes the imagination when described in words, how much beauty and pleasure do you think it presented in the actual painting of that excellent artist?"[79] The image alone, with no explanatory text, would probably not be understood or appreciated to the same degree. We know the identities of the figures because the author has told us so. Might we have arrived at the same conclusions without the text? Could we still manage to identify the actors and comprehend the story just by studying their actions, the gestures, expressions and physical appearance of the figures? It is certainly possible that some of the iconography is interpretable even without the text, but it is unlikely that we could correctly identify the personified protagonists. Likewise, we would most likely not be able to connect the characters and their actions to the slandering of an ancient Greek painter. A prior knowledge of the source text, or at the least an informed interpreter, is necessary to properly decode this image.

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[78] James A. W. Heffernan, *Cultivating Picturacy: Visual Art and Verbal Interventions.* (Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2006), 70.
[79] Alberti, *On Painting*, III.53

There are essentially two or three texts at work here: Lucian's original, Guarino's 1408 Latin translation, and Alberti's adaptation of the Guarino translation. As mentioned previously, Lucian's original text describes not only what the image looks like, but how and why this image came into existence, what it symbolizes and how it should be read. Alberti makes a very conscious effort to expunge the majority of the interpretive commentary from Lucian's description. In stark contrast to the medieval allegories mentioned above, which manifestly divided the world into good and evil, Alberti's deliberate use of only part of Lucian's text suggests his desire to leave the moral interpretation the of the story open to contemplation of the viewer. In fact, the end result of the action is uncertain. Alberti provides us with some of the information, but since he entirely omits the anecdote of the slandering of Apelles by a rival painter, we cannot know the outcome of the actions in the image from the information provided, judging only by what we 'see'. The knowledgeable spectator—one privy to the story of Apelles—can fill in the gaps and understands the connections between the historical and the allegorical. The viewer who does not know the story must puzzle out the meaning.

The fact that Alberti's *Calumny* is inescapably tied to a text is no small detail. The text, the story or anecdote behind the painting, can accentuate, we might say, its temporal dimension. Part of the temporal experience, as Barolsky pointed out, is dependent upon the viewer's knowledge and recollection of the story.[80] But what if we are unfamiliar with the source story? Alberti might agree that as long as the composition meets certain aesthetic criteria, and if it has the ability to pique the interest of the eye and the

[80] Barolsky, Paul, op cit.

consideration of the mind, it might be equally valid. One such example that comes to mind is Giovanni Bellini's *Sacred Allegory* (Figure 27) at the Uffizi in Florence (1490s), which viewers have puzzled over for five hundred years. The significance of the painting may have died with its owner and the artist. It was not, however, an image meant to speak to the public; it was meant for private consumption. It is perhaps the enigmatic allure of the painting that keeps viewers intrigued and fuels our desire to unravel its meaning. If, as with the *Calumny of Apelles*, Bellini's allegory is emblematic of a personal event, a revelation or a prophecy, unfortunately we are at a disadvantage because we do not have the luxury of an explanatory text. As such, we are all—in that sense—uninformed viewers. Iconographic clues might help us to identify some of the figures. Likewise, their positioning, placement and proximity to one another may suggest the relationships among them. Bellini's mysterious, quiet allegory is similar to that last lingering memory of a dream upon reawakening. Without recognizing a story within it, the viewer does not necessarily experience a passage of what Soriau refers to as the "intrinsic time" of the narrative. "Time of contemplation," however, is employed to identify the symbolism.

Ghiberti's evolving narrative in the *Commentarii*

Temporal continuity, stylistic evolution and artistic patrimony seem to be cornerstones for early art theorists, and humanists in general. Through the rediscovery of the ancient texts and works of art, Renaissance intellectuals sought to bridge the gap of the Middle Ages and continue the narratives of the ancient writers, philosophers,

statesmen and artists. Alberti certainly prescribes to this endeavor, but his is not the only artist to do so. Lorenzo Ghiberti also felt compelled to commit his experience and theoretical contributions to paper. Bridging the gap, and aspiring to produce a lasting document, he dedicated his *First Commentary* to a discussion of the ancient art and the treatises of Vitruvius and Pliny. The function of referencing these discussions of the arts is to establish an artistic starting point from which to continue the process of discovery and evolution. Ghiberti expresses the humanist urgency to produce and further one's knowledge, to take full advantage of the *vita activa e vita contemplativa:*

> But time, which is immutable and fluid, is not something vile that we squander with no concern: and time, by means of nature's daylight, gives us the... virtue to always work on something useful for our present lives, and similarly the night which is aptly given to us for the education of the soul.[81]

The notion is certainly nothing new, but Ghiberti's mention of the constancy and fluidity of time, coupled with the idea of development and evolutionary progress over time, seem a fitting metaphor for the artist's own stylistic evolution over his fifty year career on the Baptistery doors. Between his earliest quatrefoil panels, still expressing an inclination for the International Gothic style, and the nearly perfect three-dimensionality of the East door panels, there is an unmistakable transformation that takes place in terms of the narrative complexity of his artwork, but also to that of his contemporary colleagues.

Several analogies can be drawn between Ghiberti's masterpiece and the structuring of his *Second Commentary*. First of all, the doors themselves represent a timeline and a history: the pre-Christian genealogy of Christ. Each panel is, in a sense, a

[81] "*Ma il tempo, che e` immutabile e flusso, non e` come cosa vile dissipiamo senza riguardo: e quello usando la natura il di` darci... virtu` d'operare sempre alcuna cosa utile per la vita presente, e la notte simigliantemente essendoci conceduta attissimamente ad esercizio d'animo.*"

visual biography—at least of the major events from the lives of the Old Testament ancestors—laid out chronologically in their order of succession. In a very similar manner, Ghiberti has made a similar set of literary biographies of his artistic ancestors from Cimabue and Giotto to Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi. Conscious of taking his place on the podium next to these great artists of earlier generations, through the addition of his autobiography, Ghiberti inserts himself into this great artistic tradition.

The structuring of the events of Ghiberti's autobiography are arranged by order of their importance, much like the complex compositions of his continuous narratives. Major events are brought to the foreground and embellished upon, while other events are barely etched in to the background; yet all the particulars, major and minor, contribute to the grand scheme of his life's narrative. Among Ghiberti's great achievements, it is not surprising that he relishes in describing how he was given "the palm of victory (...) universally and without exception," out-performing his fellow competitors in the momentous contest for the Baptistery doors of 1401. It may be surprising to read that the description of the first set of bronze panels is, in fact, almost telegraphic. In a manner of speaking, the simple terms in which Ghiberti describes the panels mimics their compositional clarity and conciseness:

> In that door there are also twenty-eight squares; twenty have the stories of the New Testament and at the foot are four evangelists and four doctors of the church, with a great quantity of human heads around this work; it is carried out with great love and diligently…[82]

[82] Ghiberti, *Commentarii,* II.19

It seems a rather anticlimactic description for such a major project that kept Ghiberti employed for over twenty years. A larger amount of space is given to the description of what Ghiberti calls "the most special work I have done," his crowning achievement, the *Gates of Paradise:*

> ...these stories, filled with figures, were stories of the Old Testament, in which I tried every way to be faithful in seeking to imitate nature, as far was possible for me, and with all the outlines I could produce, and with fine compositions rich with many figures. In some stories I put a hundred figures, in some less. There were ten stories.[83]

In what follows, we can also note a shift in tone as Ghiberti provides a rather detailed description of each single continuous narrative panel. His level of enthusiasm increases exponentially with each description. As if it were in an attempt to match the level of intricacy of each single panel, his verbal descriptions become increasingly detailed and narratively complex. For example, the first panels depicting stories from the Book of Genesis (*Adam and Eve*, *Cain and Abel)* are described in a somewhat fragmented and choppy manner. The major turning points in the story are cataloged as a simple list of events, rather than a linear sequence of related cause-and-effect actions:

> The first is the Creation of man and of woman, and how they disobeyed the creator of all things. Also, in this scene (*historia*) is how they are expelled from paradise for the sin committed; this [panel] contains four scenes (*istorie*), that is incidents (*effetti*).[84]

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[83] *"..le quali istorie molto compiose di figure erano istorie del testamento vecchio, nelle quali mi ingegnai con ogni misura osservare in esse cercare initare la natura quanto a me fosse possible, e con tutti i lineamenti che in essa potessi produrre e con egregi componimenti e doviziosi di molte figure. Misi in alcuna historia circa di figure cento; in quali istorie meno in qua e in qual piu`. Le storie sono dieci."*

[84] "*La prima e` la creazione dell'uomo e della femina, e come essi disubbidirono al creatore di tutte le cose. Ancora in detta historia come e' sono cacciati del paradiso per il peccato commesso: contiene in detto [quadro] quattro istorie cioe` effetti."*

Ghiberti describes each panel as a *historia* (a narrative. story or history), and we understand from this first description that his panels are not the monoscenic compositions of the north door panels. They are also different from the original iconographic program proposed by Leonardo Bruni.[85] Instead, these are complex narratives that portray four *istorie* or *effetti* (incidents, episodes, actions) belonging to a larger story, which, in turn, is a component of a master narrative (the entire door). The *Creation* panel, as well as *Cain and Abel*, *Noah* and *Abraham and Isaac,* display compositions partitioned by elements of architecture and landscape. These dividers allow each individual event to unfold in its own pocket of space.

Beyond a doubt, Ghiberti brought the tradition of the continuous narrative to its apex. Nowhere is this better revealed as in panels such as *Jacob and Esau*, or *Solomon and Sheba.* These works exhibit a distinct stylistic evolution and a greater attempt at linear perspective through the addition of large architectural details. The unified space of the architecture helps to mask the divisions between the various *effetti* while also creating a feeling of visual continuity. The sequential actions of Ghiberti's most visually complex (and presumably final) panels are so well integrated with their settings that it becomes nearly impossible to discern the individual stories, to note the repetition of characters, or to recognize the paradox of temporally distant events, placed side-by-side.[86] Likewise,

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[85] Bruni had proposed a door to match the layout of the other existing doors of the baptistery: Ghiberti's early Quattrocento doors and Andrea Pisano's mid-Trecento south doors). Bruni suggested the doors be divided into twenty-eight individual panels, twenty of which would showcase stories of the Old Testament and the remaining eight, prophets. See Krautheimer, *Ghiberti's Bronze Doors,* Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1971, p 159.

[86] Thre is some debate regarding the chronology of the production of the panels. Krautheimer believed that panels Ghiberti produced in the later years were simpler in composition, that there were less *effetti*,that he was moving away from the continuous narrative style. Pope-Hennessey argures the opposite: that

Ghiberti's descriptions of these panels in the *Commentarii* become more detailed and fluid, mimicking the seamless narrative continuity of the image. Such temporal fluidity is discernible in his description of *Joseph and his Brothers* (Figure 28), his compositional tour-de-force:

> In the sixth panel is how Joseph is put in the well by his brothers, and how they sell him and how he is given to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and by means of the dream that revealed the famine that there was to be in Egypt Joseph found the remedy, and how all the lands and territories escaped it. And how he was greatly honored by Pharaoh. How Jacob sent his sons and Joseph recognized them, and how he told them to come again with their brother Benjamin, otherwise they would get no grain. They returned with Benjamin, he gave them a great banquet, and had the cup put in Benjamin's sack, and how it was found and brought before Joseph, and how he made himself known to his brothers.[87]

Ghiberti's level of description seems to be commensurate to the level of complexity of the image —both narrative as well as compositional. The description of his *Adam and Eve* panel was rather broken up and lackluster; there was no sense of narrative flow, of the natural connections between the actions, as there is here. In terms of composition and invention, the *Adam and Eve* panel is also one of the most straightforward and simple to interpret; perhaps because the Creation narrative is generally very well known, it required a less detailed description. In Ghiberti's description of the *Story of Joseph and his Brothers,* is recounted in a fluid manner. Each action has a cause and a consequence that

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Ghiberti's compositions became increasingly complex. See Pope-Hennessey (1980), pp. 39-70 and Krautheimer, pp. 189-202. For a succinct summary of the debate between Pope-Hennessey and Krautheimer See Jason Rosensweig, "Donatello and Ghiberti: The Choice Between Compositional Unity and Narrative Force" *Stanford Undergraduate Research Journal*, Vol.2 (2003).

[87] "Nel sesto quadro è come Joseph è messo nella Cisterna da' fratelli e come e' lo vendono e come gli è donato a Faraone Re d' Egitto e pel sogno che rivelò la gran fame [che] doveva essere in Egitto il rimedio che Joseph diede a tutte le terre e provincie scamparono : ebbono il bisogno loro; e come ei fu da Faraone molto onorato . Come Jacob mandò i figliuoli e Joseph li riconobbe : e come ei disse loro che tornassero con Beniamin loro fratello, altrimenti non arebbono grano. Tornarono con Benianmin, esso fece loro il convito e fece metter la coppa nel sacco a Beniamin e come fu trovata e menato innanzi a Joseph e come ei si die a conoscere a' fratelli."

surges forward in an uninterrupted chain of events. The individual events in this chain are so well integrated in the seamless relief, it would be nearly impossible to identify them all without the source text. Ghiberti's abridged text serves as a veritable map to navigate this otherwise complex image. Through his description, Ghiberti is able to supply information that may not be observable in the image, but that help us understand it on a more intimate level.

Until now we have examined two examples of art desritten texts; the first was that of a painting, that may or may not have ever existed, yet which has served to establish a model of composition and invention. The other is a description of a sculpted panel that still exists today. Ghiberti's descriptions of his own works were left to posterity, as part of his memoir: his scientific, literary and historical contribution to the long narrative of artistic genius. But the most famous modern example of ekphrasis predates these artists by more than one hundred years. It is of course the ekphrasis employed by Dante in the *Purgatory,* which is the focus of the next section.

Dante's ekphrasis of *Purgatory* 10

As they begin the arduous ascent of the mountain of *Purgatory* in canto 10, Virgil counsels Dante that: "*qui si conviene usare un poco d'arte*" (here we must use a little skill/art). The term *arte* is not used lightly. In its most literal context, Virgil refers to the skill and the caution they must employ while climbing the treacherous and unstable rocky terrain. But the poet's use of *arte* refers rather to a higher level of poetic eloquence.

Dante reminds the reader—as he will numerous times throughout the cantica—that his language and style will purge itself of the more common and crude forms utilized in the *Inferno*. The further he climbs toward the summit, both physically and poetically, the closer he advances toward the heavenly realm, to Beatrice, and to divine enlightenment. This multifaceted use of *arte* celebrates the technical ability to practice one's craft, the creativity and fantasy (*inventio*) of the human imagination, as well as the artifacts or products of human creation. In cantos 10-12 of *Purgatory*, the terrace of Pride, Dante will concentrate his efforts on artistic pride and the excellence of man's creative ability. Figurative art permeates these cantos, so much so that life and art often become confused and the lines between what is real and what is imitation become blurred. The walls of the terrace are sculpted into large-scale reliefs that display exempla of humility: the lesson to be learned by the prideful penitents of this realm. Like human caryatids, these penitent souls slowly purge themselves of the remnants of their sin by carrying massive boulders upon their backs. As they advance, hunched over, along the path of redemption, they must contemplate images of the negative effects of pride sculpted on the path beneath their feet.

Dante's journey through the realms of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise is, in and of itself, one colossal allegory. From the very first tercet of the *Commedia*, we are expected to seek out the deeper meanings hidden behind the terms like *cammin*, *nostra vita*, *selva oscura, diritta via, smarrito.* The poet's medium is language, and the extent to which Dante can employ the sublime power of language to represent reality will be tested when he challenges the ancient poets, and even God, to a competition of ekphrastic

representation. Some of the major examples of ekphrasis from antiquity are Homer's description of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, and the descriptions of the Trojan War frescos on Dido's Temple, the gates to Hades, and the forging of Aeneas' shield in Virgil's *Aeneid*.[88] Homer's description of Achilles' shield is a sketch of the actual work of art, of its fine details, the craftsmanship, the symbols represented and their arrangement. His description is so detailed that artists have been able to recreate the design of the shield by means of his words. Likewise Virgil's account of Aeneas' shield in Book 8 provides a clear image of the scenes and the details depicted on the shield forged by Vulcan. The Trojan War frescoes of Book 1 describe a series of images depicting key moments of the war. In each, there is a succinct description of the subject, the setting, and the unfolding action. Virgil does not place much emphasis on the naturalism of the images, but the reader assumes that the protagonists are easily identifiable; even Aeneas recognizes himself. Due to his personal involvement in the events of the war depicted, Aeneas has a very emotional reaction to seeing the images. The frescos elicit in him unpleasant memories and feelings of anguish and heartache:

> And now Achilles has dragged Hector
> three times around the walls of Troy
> and is selling the lifeless body for gold.
> Aeneas is choked with grief when he sees the spoils,
> The chariot, the corpse of his friend,
> and Priam stretching out weaponless hands. (I.596-601)

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[88] I should point out that by "ekphrasis" I intend the definition of it put forward by Svetlana Alpers (1960) and Ruth Webb (2009). That is to say that ekphrasis goes beyond mere description. The goal of such a rhetorical device is to create a clear visual for the reader, to engage the senses, to see the image in words that elicit the emotions and the experience of seeing the work of art. See Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham, England/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009); Svetlana Leontief Alpers, "Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's Lives," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 23, No. 3/4 (Jul.-Dec., 1960), 190-215.

As readers, we are kept at arm's length from Aeneas' reaction. He does not tell us firsthand, what he saw with his own eyes, or what he felt, instead his grief is noted via the narrator's voice.

Dante's description of the wall reliefs he witnesses on the terrace of pride are essentially a direct challenge to Virgil's frescoes. Through his use of ekphrasis, Dante will attempt to re-create what he saw, and the synaesthetic reactions it caused in him. In order for the reader to relive Dante's experience, the poet makes his text come to life by infusing his textual imagery with sensorial vitality. He will, as Barolini noted, "propose an art that is capable of going beyond verisimilitude, representation, to become presentation."[89]

L'angel che venne in terra col decreto	The angel who came to earth with the decree of peace
de la molt'anni lagrimata pace,	that had been wept and yearned for all those years
ch'aperse il ciel del suo lungo divieto,	which opened Heaven, ending God's long ban,
dinanzi a noi pareva sì verace	before us so vividly appeared
quivi intagliato in un atto soave,	engraved in gracious attitude
che non sembiava imagine che tace	it did not seem an image, carved and silent
Giurato si saria ch'el dicesse 'Ave! *';*	One would have sworn he was saying '*Ave*,'
perché iv'era imaginata quella	for she as well was pictured there
ch'ad aprir l'alto amor volse la chiave;	who turned the key to love on high.
e avea in atto impressa esta favella	And in her attitude imprinted were
'Ecce ancilla Deï', *propriamente*	the words: '*Ecce ancilla Dei*'
come figura in cera si suggella.	as clearly as a figure stamped in wax[90]

Dante's description of the first sculpted relief he encounters on the terrace of Pride is immediately recognizable as a very familiar Christian iconography, that of the *Annunciation*. The snippets of dialogue between the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary

[89] Barolini, Teodolinda, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 122.
[90] Dante, *Purgatorio* 10:34-45

that the poet has chosen to repeat "*Ave*" and "*Ecce ancilla Deï*," along with the visualization of their iconic gestures or *atti*, resonate within the collective memory of a society that was certainly familiar with the narrative of one of the most fundamental moments in Christianity. But they were also accustomed standard iconography of the scene through their familiarity with figurative and theatrical representations of the *Annunciation*.

By utilizing this extremely recognizable imagery, Dante depends on the reader's awareness of Christian iconography. Despite the poet's sparing description, as informed spectators/readers, his audience would naturally be able to supply any missing information and fill in any gaps of the familiar Annunciation narrative. Similar scenes were readily visible in the churches, chapels and *tabernacoli* throughout the cities and towns all around Italy. Without having to puzzle out the provided imagery, the readers can direct their attention to the more miraculous fact that the plastic rendition of this Divine art is so lifelike, the pilgrim believes he hears their dialogue.

Dante's descritpion provides the reader with a fairly precise outline of the iconographic image without providing his reader with the details of the biblical account of Luke 1:26-38. He has, in effect, condensed the much longer and detailed narrative to two key moments: the beginning and the end. He tells us nothing of Mary's initial fear at seeing and hearing the angel; there is nothing regarding her doubts about conceiving since she has never "known man." He also does not provide any of the customary iconographic and symbolic details adopted in contemporary artistic interpretations. There is no indication that the angel has interrupted Mary during her reading; there is no

reference to a book or a lectern. We know nothing of the appearance of the setting nor any mention of a symbol of her virginity or purity (a white lily, a *hortus conclusus*, a bedroom door behind her), all of which were relatively standard to Annunciation iconography in Dante's era. These pictorial details are extraneous to the poet's description of the image. For all we know, whether Dante was making reference to an actual work of art he had seen or a completely imagined iconography, such customary details may have been present in his mind. Any mention of the details is unnecessary for the reader because they are irrelevant to Dante's use of this imagery on the terrace of Pride, the purpose of which is to represent a sublime example of humility. The resulting lesson for the penitent beholder should not be Mary's initial fear, but her unconditional acceptance of God's decree. The poet guides our reading of the image in order to convey only the most salient and morally edifying moments of the narrative.

Dante's description of the scene is stripped down to the essential: the angel in "*un atto soave*" (his gentle bearing) and Mary who "*aveva in atto impressa esta favella 'Ece ancilla Dei*'" (in her bearing was stamped this speech), there is no reference to background or particulars. This was fundamental element of medieval iconography, as a didactic tool, it was crucial that the biblical passage be immediately recognized and the emphasis be placed on the act of humility, on Mary's virtue. Although the text of Luke 1:28 is more replete with details of Mary's encounter with the angel, and more specifically her doubts and apprehension, McGregor points out that medieval artists "suppressed Luke's narrative of Mary's fear, uncertainty, incomprehension and

misgivings to recreate his scene as one in which Gabriel hails and Mary acquiesces."[91] Dante's description of the *Annunciation* relief on the terrace of pride must act as a "whip" for the penitent souls, and in fact represents only the most positive aspects of this humble act. A more startled and "human" version of Mary will begin to appear in Italian art around the middle of the fourteenth century. In the next chapter, we will continue this discussion when we examine more closely the various iconographies of *Annunciations* and their narrative and temporal implications. To the purposes of this study, it is important to note that Dante's description of the *Annunciation* on the terrace of Pride, indicates an abridgement or collapsing of the source narrative. The composition clearly places two distinct actions of a single narrative episode upon the same temporal plane, as if occurring simultaneously.

The next panel on that Dante encounters is described as being depicted in a similar collapsed manner, as noted in McGregor's study. *David Dancing before the Ark* is a narrative that was much less commonly depicted in comparison to the *Annunciation*. Dante, certainly aware of this, dedicates a greater amount of text to describe it. Mary and the Angel were given four tercets, but five are allotted the story of King David. The Old Testament account of King David and the Ark of the Covenant was another fairly well-known narrative with a somewhat established iconographic tradition. The lengthy and detailed Biblical narrative spans both 1 Samuel 6 and 2 Samuel 6. As McGregor illustrates, "Dante's imagined scene of David dancing before the Ark, a narrative that

[91] James H. McGregor, "Reappraising Ekphrasis in *Purgatorio* 10." *Dante Studies*. CXXI (New York: Forham University Press. 2003), 30.

unfolds over long spans of time and space in the Bible is presented as a single simultaneous action that occurs in a moment of time."[92] Dante's stanzas describing the relief illustrates the text found in 2 Samuel 6: 12-16.[93]

Era intagliato lì nel marmo stesso
lo carro e ' buoi, traendo l'arca santa,
per che si teme officio non commesso.
Dinanzi parea gente; e tutta quanta,
partita in sette cori, a' due mie' sensi
faceva dir l'un "No," l'altro "Sì, canta."
Similemente al fummo de li 'ncensi
che v'era imaginato, li occhi e 'l naso
e al sì e al no discordi fensi.
Lì precedeva al benedetto vaso,
trescando alzato, l'umile salmista,
e più e men che re era in quel caso.
Di contra, effigïata ad una vista
d'un gran palazzo, Micòl ammirava
sì come donna dispettosa e trista.

There, carved into the marble, were the cart
and oxen, drawing the sacred ark that makes men fear
to assume an office not entrusted to them.
The foreground, peopled by figures grouped
in seven choirs, made one sense argue 'No'
and the other: 'Yes, they sing.'
In the same way, the smoke of incense
sculpted there put eyes and nose
in discord, caught between yes and no.
There the humble psalmist leaped in dance
before the blessèd vessel with his robe hitched up--
and was at once both more and less than king.
Opposite, a figure at the window
of a splendid palace, Michal looked on,
like a woman vexed and scornful.[94]

Dante includes details and references from throughout this extended narrative. Some references, as McGregor notes, even point to earlier moments in the story. His reference to "*officio non commesso*," (offices not appointed) for example, is in reference to 2 Samuel 6:6 where Uzzah is struck dead when he accidentally touched the Ark, an act that was forbidden.[95] Another factor which adds a level of duration to the actions of the relief panel can be gleaned through Dante's experience as a spectator. As he deciphers the

[92] McGregor, 31

[93] "Now King David was told, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. **13** When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. **14** Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, **15** while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets. **16** As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart."

[94] Dante, *Purgatorio*. 10: 55-69

[95] McGregor, 31.

actions and the details of the scene, the reader also experiences his reading of the image and the unfolding of the actions. The level of description and sensory stimulation also increases the verisimilitude of the experience. God's artwork is so close to perfection it not only stimulates the pilgrim's viewing experience as the visual narrative comes to life before his eyes, it also confuses his perceptions.

This is also true of the third relief, which provides the last exemplar of humility, *Trajan and the Widow*. The story of Trajan, as presented by Dante is of his own invention. There are no sources, visual or textual, that describe the scene as he has chosen to interpret it for us. The Emperor, on horseback and about to ride off to battle has been described, by Brieger, as being reminiscent of a medieval romance.[96] The scene depicts an elderly widow making a request that the Emperor avenge the murder of her son. The great Emperor humbly performs this act of chivalry and delays his campaign to first attend to her request. Perhaps it seems odd that Trajan, a pagan, should be utilized as an example of Christian humility, but Dante places Trajan in the sphere of Jupiter in *Paradiso* 20.45. His justification, in a manner of speaking, is found here in the text describing the relief when he names his historical source, the life of Gregory the Great: "*Quiv' era storïata l'alta gloria/ del roman principato, il cui valore/ mosse Gregorio a la sua gran vittoria*" (Depicted there was the glorious act /of the Roman prince whose worth/ urged Gregory on to his great victory). Dante is making reference to Gregory's intercession and posthumous salvation of Trajan, which allegedly happened after the

[96] *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, edited by Peter Brieger, Millard Meiss, and Charles S. Singleton, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 86. See also, McGregor, p.34.

pope's revelation before a statue of Trajan and a widow in Trajan's forum, which moved him to compassion, as recorded by Vincent de Beauvais.[97]

Dante's third relief in the series does not follow the same collapsed narrative pattern of the first two panels. Based on the description, it also does not make reference to any of the ancient scenes on Trajan's column, which potentially could have acted as iconographic models. One such scene which Vickers considers as perhaps similar in theme, is that of scene 75, spiral 11 on the column (Figure 29), which depicts the defeated Dacians kneeling at the feet of the Emperor, apparently requesting clemency. Dante's rendition is a personal vision of the event, a narrative that the poet has written to illustrate the scene that moved the Pope to compassion. It highlights the request of an individual, an act of kindnesses and humility extended to the poor widow:

Quiv' era storïata l'alta gloria	Depicted there was the glorious act
del roman principato, il cui valore	of the Roman prince whose worth
mosse Gregorio a la sua gran vittoria;	urged Gregory on to his great victory--
i' dico di Traiano imperadore;	I speak of the emperor Trajan,
e una vedovella li era al freno,	with the poor widow at his bridle, weeping,
di lagrime atteggiata e di dolore.	in a pose of grief--
Intorno a lui parea calcato e pieno	the soil all trampled by the thronging knights.
di cavalieri, e l'aguglie ne l'oro	Above, the eagles fixed in gold
sovr' essi in vista al vento si movieno.	seemed to flutter in the wind.
La miserella intra tutti costoro	In their midst, one could almost hear the plea
pareva dir: "Segnor, fammi vendetta	of that unhappy creature: 'My lord, avenge
di mio figliuol ch'è morto, ond' io m'accoro";	my murdered son for me. It is for him I grieve,'
ed elli a lei rispondere: "Or aspetta	and his answer: 'Wait till I return,'
tanto ch'i' torni"; e quella: "Segnor mio,"	and she: 'My lord,' like one whose grief is urgent,
come persona in cui dolor s'affretta,	'and if you don't return?' and his answer:

[97] "*Statua eius in foro traiani in hoc habitu posita est, representans quomodo in expedecione positus, viduam liberavit. Quod beatum gregorium postea movit ad compassionem"* (His statue in the Forum of Trajan is posed in a manner that represents how pausing in his expedition he liberated a widow. This moved the Blessed Gregory afterwards to compassion). Nancy J. Vickers, "Seeing is Believing: Gregory, Trajan, and Dante's Art," *Dante Studies with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 101 (1983): 67-86. Quoted by McGregor, p. 36.

"se tu non torni?"; ed ei: "Chi fia dov' io,	'He who will take my place will do it,'
la ti farà"; ed ella: "L'altrui bene	and she: 'What use is another's goodness to you
a te che fia, se 'l tuo metti in oblio?";	if you are unmindful of your own?'
ond' elli: "Or ti conforta; ch'ei convene	And he then: 'Now take comfort, for I must discharge
ch'i' solva il mio dovere anzi ch'i' mova:	my debt to you before I go to war.
giustizia vuole e pietà mi ritene."	Justice wills it and compassion bids me stay.'
Colui che mai non vide cosa nova	He in whose sight nothing can be new
produsse esto visibile parlare,	wrought this speech made visible,
novello a noi perché qui non si trova.	new to us because it is not found on earth.
Mentr' io mi dilettava di guardare	While I took pleasure in the sight
l'imagini di tante umilitadi,	of images of such humility,
e per lo fabbro loro a veder care...	the lovelier to look at for their maker's sake... [98]

Just as Dante concludes here, and as Alberti prescribed in his own treatise, these narratives are meant to both instruct and delight through pleasurable means. They are also so exceedingly life-like, they fool the Pilgrim into seeing movement and hearing sounds and experiencing sensations, like the smell of incense, that are not present in reality. The experience of the narrative, its unfolding and development, plus the viewer's contemplation of them trigger sensations which move the spectator to feel something and to be transformed by it, much like Pope Gregory was transformed by the statue depicting Trajan's compassion.

Each relief is described in sensorial terms, and each relief, as the pilgrim advances along the path becomes increasingly verisimilar. In the *Annunciation*, both the Angel and Mary, through their silent gestures, appear to speak; they perform a universal sign language that the pilgrim hears as spoken words in his head. In the scene of *David Dancing before the Ark*, there is an increased amount of visual description to set the scene. Dante mentions the crowds of people, an ox drawn cart with the Ark and *un gran*

[98] Dante, *Purgatorio*, 10.73-99.

palazzo. This is not the silent moment of the *Annunciation*; the poet claims to both see and hear seven choruses and that it caused great confusion between his visual and auditory capacities: "*a' due mie' sensi / faceva dir l'un: 'No,' l'altro: 'Sì, canta'.'*"[99] ([it] made one of my two senses say: "No," the other: "Yes, they are singing.") Likewise his perception of the smoke from depicted incense, clouds his eyes and fills his nostrils, causing disorientation and discord between his senses of vision and olfaction. Dante's confrontation with the visual rendering of the artwork of the first two reliefs causes in him a synesthetic reaction: in the first he perceives hearing while viewing, and in the second, seems to see, hear and smell simultaneously.

These reactions or interactions coalesce and compound in the Trajan relief to become yet another art form. The atmosphere of the scene is so realistic that the banners emblazoned with the imperial eagle seem to flutter in the breeze ("*e l'aguglie ne l'oro sovr'essi in vista al vento si movieno*") and the figures of Trajan and the widow are so expressive, they become *dramatis personae* in a theatrical scene. Their mock dialogue confuses, amuses, and ultimately educates the reader/viewer/listener, just as it did the Pilgrim, Dante: "*Mentr' io mi dilettava di guardare / l'imagini di tante umilitadi, / e per lo fabbro loro a veder care,* ("as I was delighting to see /the images of so many humilities,/ precious to see also because of their maker...").[100] Dante's ekphrastic tactics act as a positive didactic method; text and image work together symbiotically. The stone reliefs are complemented by the array of interwoven texts—the poem itself, the historical,

[99] Dante, *Purgatorio*, 10.59-60.
[100] Dante, *Purgatorio*. 10.97-99.

Old Testament, and New Testament metatexts ("*un'altra storia"* [52]; "*un'altra historia"* [71], *storiata l'alta Gloria* [73])—which serve not only to communicate the underlying moral lessons of the Scriptures, but also verbally, sensationally and physically recreate the stage or the space of the first terrace.

Perhaps the most innovative quality of Dante's visual compositions is their ability to express a narrative progression more akin to literature. Of course we must rely on the vehicle of poetry to "see" the reliefs witnessed by the pilgrim, but the energy and excitement conveyed through his experience communicate the uniqueness of the composition. In fact, Dante is cognizant of the novelty of such a representation; when the poet writes that the art of the terrace is "*novello a noi perche qui non si trova*" (new to us because here it is not found), he testifies that what he witnessed was somehow unfamiliar to the real works of art being produced by the painters and sculptors of his time. It may be tempting to read this passage as Dante showing his poetic bravado—which he is—or proclaiming the superiority of poetic mimesis (perhaps heralding the *paragone* debate between poetry and the visual arts), but I do not believe that this is Dante's agenda in Purgatory 10-12. Undoubtedly, these cantos address the "sin" of artistic pride on many levels, but I believe the poet posts his challenge directly to the artists of his age. The objective is to produce art that, much like his poem, is sublime, something by which "not only Polyclitus/ but even Nature would be put to scorn."[101] Dante even concedes that contemporary styles are moving in the right direction and praises, above all, Giotto who

[101] Dante, *Purgatory,* 10. 32-33.

has stolen Cimabue's thunder.[102] The focus of these cantos centers on artists and on pride. The creative ability and desire to replicate nature –a direct reflection or imitation of Divine perfection—renders artists, poets and musicians guilty of pride in their attempt to become God-like. From first-hand experience the Dante is well aware that artists and poets are among the principle offenders, but he attempts to keep their pride in check with the knowledge that time and progress will always bring about a successor.[103]

Imitation of nature is the goal of artist, but nature is not merely three-dimensional. Because actions take place in space but also over time, a faithful mimesis should, theoretically, factor in the dimension of time as well. The visual artist is at an unfortunate disadvantage given the static nature of their mediums. In these passages, however, Dante seems to recommend a new style (or perhaps an already emerging trend) of figurative narrative that employs a synthesis of the most salient moments, represented simultaneously, harmoniously, and in hyper-realistic detail. The artwork suggests a polyscenic or *polynarrative* nature, contained within the apparent unity of a single frame. From the text, the reader infers that these images are not represented as a series of sequential, monoscenic events. They are also not described as continuous narratives in which the protagonists are depicted multiple times in different temporal moments, within a single frame (both of which were indicative of popular compositional styles in Dante's

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[102] *Credette Cimabue ne la pittura/tener lo campo, e ora ha Giotto il grido,/ sì che la fama di colui è scura* (Purg. 11.94-96)

[103] At Purg. 11.97-99, through the voice of the illuminator Oderisi da Gubbio (who admits to having been succeeded by Franco of Bologna), the poet tacitly proposes himself as the successor to Guido Guinizelli and Guido Cavalcante: *"così ha tolto l'uno a l'altro Guido/ la gloria del la lingua, e forse è nato/ chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido."*

era).[104] A fourteenth-century illumination and images by Botticelli and Luca Signorelli exhibit how artists interpreted the Dante's verses to create their interpretations of the relief panels on the terrace of Pride (Figure 30-Figure 32). Each artist has represented a series of three, single frame compositions.[105] Within those single frames, the images all represent more than a single moment of the narratives they symbolize. In the next chapter will examine these images more closely in relation to their source texts to see just how Dante composed his images. We will then explore if and how artists employed similar techniques, perhaps in an attempt to lengthen the temporal breadth of their visual narratives.

[104] The pilgrim purposefully recounts his physical movement between the three sculptured images, and he makes note of this motion twice. See Purgatory 10.46-54 and 10.70-72.

[105] The Holkham MS (Fig. 17), recomposes the individual frames in a vertical layout, perhaps due to the reduced space of the page, though it is clear from the text that the reliefs are aligned horizontally. All three images represents the awe the sculptures inspire in the spectator, while the images of Signorelli (Figure 32) and Botticelli (Figure 32) best exhibit their monumentality and realism. Signorelli even envisions the continuation of the wall reliefs to the right. In the poem, Virgil redirects the pilgrim's attention to the prideful penitents, before Dante can mention whether there are additional reliefs along the wall.

Chapter 2: The Unfolding Annunciation

The relief depicting the Annunciation that Dante describes in Purgatory 10 is recognizable by a mere four words ("*Ave!*" - "*Ecce ancilla Dei*"). The mention of these four words reduces the lengthier narrative to two actions, and these, in turn, are read through the performance of two *atti*, or gestures. As mentioned above, Dante's laconic referencing of the gospel account of the Annunciation (Luke 1:28-36) provides just enough essential information for the reader to recognize the very familiar and popular narrative.[106] What is striking about his description is the manner in which it encompasses two key moments of the Annunciation narrative—the angel's greeting, and Mary's final and complete acceptance—but presents them as simultaneous actions. The poet's description, therefore, does not depict one single symbolic *punctum temporis* from the biblical account, but two distinct actions which are not immediately sequential within the textual narrative. This effectively reduces the story to a beginning and an ending, thus providing the reader with an abridged version that underscores the intended purpose of this particular image.

[106] In fact, it provides just enough information ("*ecce ancilla dei"*) that we would not mistake it for a similar scene such as the *Annunciation of the Death of the Virgin*: a subject included in Duccio's Maestà, painted in the first decade of the Trecento in Siena. According to Jacopo da Voragine's *Golden Legend*: "And an angel came tofore her, with great light, and saluted her honourably as the mother of his Lord, saying: All hail! blessed Mary, receiving the blessing of him that sent his blessing to Jacob, lo! here a bough of palm of paradise, Lady, which I have brought to thee, which thou shalt command to be borne tofore thy bier" (Vol 4, p.110). In representations of the *Annunciation of the Death of Mary*, the only significant iconographical differences from the Annunciations of the Birth of Christ are that the angel holds a palm frond rather than a lily, a scepter, a rod or a scroll, and the emblems of the Holy Spirit are not present.

Michael Baxandall has shown how in the fifteenth century, there existed a practice of breaking down narratives into series of discrete moments.[107] As an example, Baxandall cites Fra Roberto Carracciolo's sermon which categorizes various iconographies of the Annunciation into a series of gestures and actions. Fra Roberto advised that painters utilize these particular iconographic moments to communicate specific didactic lessons. Regarding the Annunciation, Fra Roberto divided the narrative into three major mysteries as: the Angelic Mission, the Angelic Salutation, and the Angelic Colloquy. Based on his close reading of Luke 1:26-38, Fra Roberto also broke down the various emotional conditions the Virgin Mary might manifest during the Angelic Colloquy: *Conturbatio* (Disquiet), *Cogitatio* (Reflection), *Interrogatio* (Inquiry), *Humiliatio* (Humility), and *Meritatio* (Merit).

Dante's image represents a combination of the mysteries identified in Fra Roberto's sermon. It references the Angelic Salutation because it refers to the *atto soave* of the angel (indicating "honour, kneeling to Mary (as well as) the giving of grace [etc.]"), but it also depicts Mary's state of *Humiliatio* during the Angelic Colloquy (wherein, Mary, "lowering her head […] spoke: 'Behold the handmaiden of the Lord'").[108] The didactic purpose of Dante's image is to act a sublime symbol of humility on the terrace of Pride. The poet—or in this case God, who is the "true" author, since the poet is merely the beholder—chooses to portray the apex of Mary's humility: the moment when she opens herself up to God's Will. The gospel account in Luke as well as

[107] Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988), 48-56.
[108] Baxandall, *Painting and Experience,* 49-51.

apocryphal texts, describe her initial response as bewilderment, or even timidity. Despite the fact that Mary is "full of grace" and predestined to be the mother of Christ, she is, after all, still human and initially reacts on instinct. In the texts, her initial astonishment and circumspection are followed by confusion and inquiry (*Interogatio*) as she seeks to understand how could she bear the son of God *and* maintain her state of grace and perpetual virginity. For the didactic purposes of this particular image –to serve as a model for those guilty of pride—it would have been counterproductive to show her moments of human weakness. Dante has chosen didactic clarity over the chronological precision of the textual narrative, and he achieves this by fast-forwarding through the moments of doubt. He provides the initial cause and the final outcome and eliminates the tedious process of debate to arrive at such a conclusion. In other words, if Dante's objective had been to present a faithful literary interpretation of the Gospel text, at the precise moment of the angel's salutation to Mary, "*Ave, Gratia plena,* Dominus tecum," we should expect to see Mary depicted at the same *punctum temporis,* with an expression of (*Conturbatio*) uncertainty, fear, or surprise.

Iconographies that exhibited the precision of an individual moment from within the biblical narrative were not uncommon in Annunciation scenes from Dante's era: the late 13th and early 14th-century. Such a sentiment can be seen in the works of thirteenth-century artists Giudo da Siena (Figure 33) and Nicola Pisano (Figure 34). In images such as these, Mary's body language communicates what Fra Roberto had

categorized as the "laudable condition of *Conturbatio*."[109] With an air of uncertainty, she withdraws her body and angles her head away from the angel. She holds her right hand, palm down, across her chest, and close to her heart. These gestures operate as a form of bodily closure toward the angel; they are an instinctive means of protecting oneself from an unexpected intruder. Mary's facial expressions in these examples do not communicate fear as much as they do timidity (*Conturbatio*) or even circumspection (*Cogitatio*) toward the approaching angel. This type of behavior would have been morally correct for a young virgin, alone, and in the presence of an unknown male.[110]

In other depictions from the early 14th century, Mary exhibits a decidedly more emphatic expression of distancing herself from the angel with an outstretched arm, as if holding him at bay or refusing him. This can be seen for instance in the Santa Reparata polyptych (ca. 1305-10) in Florence, attributed to the workshop of Giotto (Figure 35), in the panel of the so-called Master of the Spinola Annunciation, ca. 1320 (Figure 36), or in the small travelling altar of 1333 (Figure 37). In all three cases, the angel's hand is held up in the *loquendi* or benediction gesture—indicating the Angelic Salutation and the initial moment of their encounter—while the young Virgin Mary is clearly disturbed by his presence. In the Santa Reparata and Spinola depictions, it appears that she is trying to flee the encounter as she attempts to exit the right side of the pictorial stage. In the 1333

[109] Baxandall, *Painting and Experience,* 51. I would tend to argue however that Mary does not appear to show the expression, that Nicholas of Lyra described as coming from not from incredulity but from wonder. Her expression, as is often depicted in these types of images is clearly fear, disquiet, or circumspection.

[110] From the *Legenda Aurea*, The Annunciation of the Virgin. "When that the angel Gabriel was sent for to show the incarnation of our Saviour Jesu Christ, he found her alone, enclosed in her chamber, like as S. Bernard saith, in which the maidens and virgins ought to abide in their houses, without running abroad out openly, and they ought also to flee the words of men, of which their honour and good renomee might be lessed or hurt."

triptych, the cramped triangular pinnacles of the opposing hinged wings dictate a kneeling pose for both figures. Trapped in this position, Mary cannot retreat like her earlier counterparts. Instead she protects herself with both hands: the left hand crossed over her breast while the right arm fully extended in the direction of angel and her palm halts his approach.

The scene that Dante describes in Purgatory 10 (quoted above in Chapter One) is notably different from what is depicted in these Trecento Annunciations. The intimate moment described is peaceful and quiet; the protagonists are communicating with each other through their *atti*, with meaningful gestures and postures. The angel's gesture is described as *soave*, gracious and kindly, not threatening in any way. Dante is very clear that the angelic messenger appeared, by mean of his gesture, to be saying "*Ave!*" We would therefore expect to see the angel in the moment of delivering his decree. The most likely pose for such a proclamation would be the sign of a blessing: his hand raised with both the index and middle fingers (or sometimes just the index finger) extended but curving slightly, the other three fingers curled inward.

Mary's *atto*, her humble pose and her body language, gives Dante the distinct impression that she was saying, "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord." The words "*Ecce ancilla Dei,"* according to the account in Luke 1:28-36, are the last words spoken by Mary, but they are not her only words. Between the "*Ave"* and the "*Ecce ancilla Dei,"* there is a period of questioning and incomprehension that Dante eliminates from his interpretation. Questioning, fear, or refusal might suggest an act of pride toward God's decree. In Dante's version there is no room for even the slightest mention of fear or

reluctance. Mary must be shown here for her great gesture of humility and in her full and unconditional acceptance of her role as the mother of Christ.

What other clues are presented in Dante's text that might give an indication as to Mary's *atto di umiltà,* her gesture of humility? Since the poet does not provide us with any explicit description of her bearing, we can really only speculate as to exactly how Mary might be physically expressing her humbled state. Let us digress for a moment to take a closer look at the theme of *umiltà* in the realm of Purgatory, in order to better envision the possibilities of Mary's attitude or pose.

Humility is the core virtue of the entire *Purgatorio.* Atonement for one's sins cannot be achieved unless one sets aside pride. Dante learns this lesson immediately upon his arrival at the purgatorial shores, when Cato instructs Virgil to take Dante to the water's edge and cleanse him of the grime accumulated in Hell, and then to gird him with the tender rushes that grow along the shores in the soft mud.[111] The "*molle* limo," or soft mud, recalls pliability of the humus, or earth, from which Adam was molded. The rush is a humble plant; because of its ability to bend and bow, the compliant rush is able to survive the pounding waves. Virgil does as he is commanded and leads Dante down to the shore. In these lines the text emphasizes their downward motion: "He began: 'Son, follow my steps: let us turn back, for from here this plain slants down to its low boundaries'."[112] Then Virgil kneels on the ground, "... both his hands, spreading them,

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[111] "Go then, and see that you gird this man with a smooth rush and wash his face so as to remove all the grime; (...) This island, all around its very base, down there where the surf beats on it, bears rushes upon its soft mud: no other plant that bears leaves or hardens can have life there because it would not yield with the blows." (*Purgatorio,* 1.94-103)

[112] Dante, *Purgatorio,* 1.112-114.

my master gently placed on the tender grass." (124-125). Wetting his hands with the morning dew, Virgil washes Dante's tear-stained cheeks before leading him to the shore.

Venimmo poi in sul lito diserto,	Then we came to the deserted shore,
che mai non vide navicar sue acque	which never saw any man sail its
omo, che di tornar sia poscia esperto.	water who afterwards experienced return.
Quivi mi cinse sì com' altrui piacque:	There he girded me as it pleased another:
oh maraviglia! ché qual elli scelse	Oh wonder! for as he plucked the humble plant
l'umile pianto, cotal si rinacque	It was suddenly reborn:
subitamente là onde l'avelse.	identical, where he had uprooted it.[113]

The acts of kneeling on the ground, touching the earth, plucking the pliant rush, and the process of cleansing, all work as a brief but significant metaphor for the humbling of oneself required for ascent and the process of spiritual purgation. The contact with the earth, prostration, genuflection, bowing one's head, are all symbols of humility and contrast sharply with the figures in Hell, whom Dante saw ostentatiously defying the Creator (*i.e*. the prideful and unrelenting Capaneus in *Inf.* 14.47-72; or Vanni Fucci, "the thief [who] raised his hands with both figs, crying 'Take them God, I'm aiming at you'" [*Inf.* 25.1-3], giving God the finger). The miraculous re-sprouting of the rush is, of course, an allusion to the resurrection of the flesh. The very humble rush—that bends and sways to the forces of Nature—represents those souls who are willing to humble themselves in front of God, and to ask for forgiveness. Only the humble souls will be to share in eternal bliss.

Additional suggestions that indicate the correct postures of humility are found in Cantos 10-12, when the pilgrim grapples with the view the penitent souls purging themselves of their Pride. After his confounding sensory experience with the wall

[113] Dante, *Purgatorio*, 1.130-137.

reliefs—stone which appeared to have been brought to life—he suffers another moment of bewilderment when he realizes that walking stones he witnesses are, in fact, the penitent souls. Their *contrapasso,* requires that they bear enormous boulders on their backs, and so laden with the weight of their sin, they circle the path to until they reach atonement and no longer feel the weight of the stone. One of boulder-bearing souls is the artist, Oderisi da Gubbio, whom Dante knew. In order to hear Oderisi's story, Dante humbles himself by bowing down and, "all hunched, [he] trudged on beside them."[114] The pilgrim's compassion for the plight of the human caryatids compels him walk with them as they do, bent over, sharing their burden.

Di pari, come buoi che vanno a giogo,	As oxen go beneath their yoke
m'andava io con quell' anima carca,	that overladen soul and I went side by side
fin che 'l sofferse il dolce pedagogo.	as long as my dear escort granted.
Ma quando disse: "Lascia lui e varca;	But when he said: 'Leave him and hurry on,
ché qui è buono con l'ali e coi remi,	for it is fitting here, with all your strength,
quantunque può, ciascun pinger sua barca";	to speed your ship with wings and oars,'
dritto sì come andar vuolsi rife'mi	I straightened up, erect,
con la persona, avvegna che i pensieri	as one should walk, but still my thoughts
mi rimanessero e chinati e scemi.	remained bowed down and shrunken.
Io m'era mosso, e seguia volontieri	I set out, following gladly
del mio maestro i passi, e amendue	in my master's steps, and our easy stride
già mostravam com' eravam leggeri;	made clear how light we felt.[115]

Dante's act of humility and his symbolic purgation rids him of the weight of his sin and gives him the new-found energy to stand tall once more. Nonetheless his mindset remains bowed down and humbled. From these indications regarding the postures of the penitent, we might infer the implication that Dante's conception of Annunciate Virgin would have her kneel or bow, as a symbol of humility and service to God.

[114] Dante, *Purgatorio* 11.78.
[115] Dante, *Purg*atorio 12.1-12.

The aforementioned illustrations of *Purgatory* 10 by Botticelli and Signorelli (Figures 32-33) exhibit exactly this sort of interpretation of the text. In Botticelli's drawing, the angel genuflects and Mary kneels on both knees. They bend toward one another, bowing their heads (Figure 38). Gabriel makes the *loquendi* sign, but more than a decree, his inaudible words give us the idea of a whisper. His very reverent bow and warm approach convey the feeling of Dante's adjective, *soave.* Mary also appears to have a sweet and dutiful disposition; she leans forward and bows her head, yet lifts her chin and cocks her head slightly to the side, in submission. Both her hands are held together over her heart, overlapping and nearly crossing at the wrist. Signorelli's fresco (Figure 39) also depicts Gabriel in genuflection, with the difference that his head and chin are held erect. Mary is seated, yet bows her head forward, and lowers her gaze in reverence. Her arms are crossed over her chest in a gesture of willful submission. These images, clearly based on the poet's text, display the sort of polynarrativity described by the poet: the combination of the "*Ave"* and the "*Ecce ancilla Dei"* moments. As we shall see ahead, such iconography was not unusual in Annunciations of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento, but we must consider whether it was it utilized in Dante's time.

In his reassessment of Dante's ekphrasis, James McGregor posits that the poet's description of the three images, depicting the *Annunciation*, *David Rejoicing before the Ark,* and *Trajan and the Widow*, may have been largely influenced by his own observations of extant works of art. This notion, however, as McGregor notes, has traditionally been denied by scholars such as Julius von Schlosser, Fortunato Bellonzi and Ferruccio Ulivi, who deny that Dante's imagery had any links to specific, extant

works of art, and sustain that the three scenes in question are, in fact, fruit of Dante's imagination.[116] To be certain, McGregor is not suggesting that the poet lacked imagination, but rather that "Dante broke with the Vergilian pattern of freely imagining these ekphrastic scenes in order to make a point about visual as opposed to narrative representation and understanding."[117] The author contends that, although specific works of art may not be identifiable, Dante's ekphrasis reflects "the normal visual iconography of his period."[118] As such, in regards to the subject of the Annunciation, McGregor argues that Dante has simply condensed the Biblical text, "in exactly the way that it had traditionally been done in visual iconography," but was the Annunciation traditionally depicted in "exactly" this way? [119] First let us examine McGregor's full assertion in context:

> While some very early illustrations of the *Annunciation* showed Mary's fear or reluctance, long before the twelfth century the scene had been reduced to *the action of a single moment, in just the way Dante depicts it* [emphasis added]. That transformation was not carried out by commentators on the Biblical text, but by a visual tradition that worked to create an instantly recognizable, one-scene version of this complex story. To achieve that heightened emblematic representation, visual artists collapsed the multi-part Biblical story into a simple dialogue.[120]

While I agree with the McGregor's idea that artists must often create convenient "one-scene version[s] of a complex story," I must take some issue with his characterization that such a composition as Dante's describes the "action of a single moment." As demonstrated in the earlier part of this chapter, Dante's ekphrastic image represents a

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[116] McGregor, p. 26. (McGregor lists his bibliographic source in notes 4-6 [pp39-40]).
[117] McGregor, 39n.
[118] McGregor, 27.
[119] McGregor, 30.
[120]McGregor, 30.

simultaneous fusion of two different moments. When confronted with the source text, it is easy see that the "*Ave!"* moment and the "*Ecce ancilla Dei"* moment are neither simultaneous, nor immediately sequential. They are, in fact, two distinct moments from the same narrative, which are temporally detached from one another, separated by a significant dialogue. McGregor is accurate in saying that some compositions that existed before the circulation of the *Purgatorio* were similar to what Dante describes, in the sense that they were often pared down to two figures with little or no setting. It is, however, an over-generalization to say that this was, "*exactly* the way that it had traditionally been done in visual iconography."

A composition such as Dante describes is not accomplished by simply reducing the scene to a speaking angel and a compliant Mary. The difference of Dante's *Annunciation* lies also within the viewer's experience. According to the pilgrim's account, the level of verisimilitude of the figures and their gestures is such "that Polycletus and nature herself / would there be put to shame." The imagery expresses itself. It is through the act of hearing, seeing, and feeling that the story unfolds, that it conveys emotion, and moves the spectator without words. It engages the viewer, through an act of reading and creating connections between the disparate narrative moments. In the next section, we will examine the stylistic evolution of Annunciation iconographies. In doing so we will find that some artists did, in fact, collapse the narrative to represent two moments. However, we shall see that few come close to emulating the continuity of the vivid and self-revealing polynarrative that Dante describes in his poetry.

The Annunciation: iconographic traditions

The Annunciation is perhaps the most popular and easily recognizable theme in Christian iconography after the crucified Christ. The passage in the Book of Luke that records the episode is virtually devoid of any details regarding the location, the appearance or the gestures of the protagonists. And yet, artists have interpreted this brief but fundamental Christian scene in a myriad of versions that make assumptions about the setting, the body language and expressions. These details, as seen in Fra Roberto's categorizations, may be helpful in situating the scene at specific temporal moments of the narrative. McGregor posits that Dante had drawn inspiration for his collapsed narrative (*i.e.* one that simultaneously combines the beginning and the ending of the Annunciation text) from a long-standing iconographic tradition. If this is accurate, we should find clear evidence of similar compositions among earlier Annunciations.

The earliest examples of the Annunciation, such as the second-century fresco in the Catacombs of Priscilla (Figure 40) or the fifth-century mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore (Figure 41), both in Rome, depict Mary seated on the left hand side of the painting and Gabriel on the right. The hand of the angel is outstretched, indicating the elected Mary, but it does not exhibit the *loquendi* gesture. The catacomb fresco shows none of the later details that would be added, such as lilies, a staff, spindle or book that might help to identify the scene with certainty. The S. Maria Maggiore mosaic does include the white dove, and the very regal looking Mary appears to be winding a skein of yarn from the basket adjacent to her chair—a detail alluded to in non-canonical texts such as the *Protoevangelium of James*—but the addition of several other accompanying angels

dissociates the image from the gospel and apocryphal narratives. Because these early representations are lacking many of the details that would clearly designate them as Annunciations, it is difficult to recognize them as such.

Medieval depictions (Figure 43-Figure 44) often utilized specific devices to indicate time within the composition. The gospel account of the Annunciation, while evocative for its dialogue and the emotional effects it carries, makes no reference to details regarding the setting. Many of the details included by artists in Annunciation iconographies were borrowed from apocryphal texts that describe Mary as located near a temple, spinning thread, or reading from her prayer book, at the moment the angel arrived.[121] As such, Mary is often represented holding a spindle, a distaff, or a book and is often near a building (the temple), a chair or a lectern. The effect of these attributes is twofold; it aids the viewer's recognition of the scene as an Annunciation, but it also helps situate the narrative moment, giving a clue to Mary's previous activity. The angel in these representations displays the *loquendi* gesture, a sign of his greeting. He generally carries a staff, or a scroll with the written Word as a symbol of his Mission. Only after 1300 does he begin to carry a lily or—in the Sienese tradition—an olive branch.[122]

Early Gothic depictions—often in the form of sculptural or stained glass details on Cathedrals—pared down the composition to include just the two protagonists standing, facing one another as can be seen in Figure 45-Figure 48. The angel is typically

[121] This may refer to the text of the *Protoevangelium of James* in which it is told that Mary was asked to spin thread for the veil in the temple. See also, David M. Robb, "The Iconography of the Annunciation in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1936), 481.
[122] The appearance of the white lilies in a vase between the protagonists dates back to Pietro Cavallini's (1250-1330) mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, ca. 1291 (Figure 42) Robb, p. 482 . Robb lists the addition of the white flowers as the most significant addition to Annunciation iconography in the 13th century.

shown giving the *loquendi* gesture of benediction, while Mary stands or sits, angled either toward or perpendicular to the angel, with her right hand raised and with a book in her left hand. The palm of her hand is either directed outward toward the angel or held at a ninety degree angle to her chest. The gesture is perplexing. The outward facing palm seems to suggest that she may be surprised, guarding herself from the approaching angel, or attempting to keep him and his words at bay. If this is indeed the interpretation, we might conclude that these compositions depict the initial moment of the encounter, the *"Ave!"* moment. Like her hand gesture, Mary's facial expressions are indecipherable. Her expression can be described as solemn to slightly frowning, but whether this is in relation to the her initial reaction of anxiety (*Conturbatio),* her circumspection (*Cogitatio),* an expression of inquiry (*Interrogatio)* or her understanding the significance of the situation, is difficult to determine.

Polynarrative *Annunciations* before Dante

There are examples of *Annunciation* scenes that pre-date Dante's poem, which exhibit the sort collapsed, polynarrative composition he describes in *Purgatory* 10. It is interesting to note that the majority of these are found, not in the form of sculptures, panel paintings, frescoes, or stained glass windows, but in the very place where text and image coexist and complement one another: among the pages illuminated manuscripts where the image acts as a visual shorthand for the lengthier text. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that in *Purgatory* 11 Dante begins his discussion on the stylistic evolution in

the visual arts and the transitory nature of artistic fame by conversing with the spirit of the illuminator of manuscripts, Oderisi da Gubbio.

"Oh!" diss'io lui, "non se' tu Oderisi,	'Oh!' I said to him, 'Are you not Oderisi,
l'onor d'Agobbio e l'onor di quell' arte	the honor of Gubbio, and the honor of that art
ch'alluminar chiamata è in Parisi?"	called illumination in Paris?'
"Frate," diss' elli, "più ridon le carte	'Brother,' he said, 'the pages touched
che pennelleggia Franco Bolognese;	by Franco of Bologna's brush, laugh more;
l'onore è tutto or suo, e mio in parte	the honor is now all his, and mine in part.
Ben non sare' io stato sì cortese	I would certainly not have been so generous
mentre ch'io vissi, per lo gran disio	while I lived, because of the great supremacy
de l'eccellenza ove mio core intese.	that my heart was intent on. [123]

Oderisi da Gubbio and Franco da Bologna are virtually unknown to us today, but they were apparently quite celebrated in Dante's era and were perhaps even an acquaintances of the poet. As a poet and scholar, Dante would have spent much of his time studying manuscripts, and in his exiled wanderings as a guest at foreign courts, he no doubt perused countless collections, with volumes from around the Europe and the Mediterranean. It is quite possible that Dante's first encounter with a polynarrative composition occurred among the pages of an illuminated text.

Some twelfth-century illuminations that display something more akin to Dante's description of multiple moments of the Annunciation narrative can be found in German manuscripts (Figure 49-Figure 52), which would have also been available among the collections of Northern Italy. In these illustrations the angel exhibits the traditional *loquendi* gesture. Mary, on the other hand, exhibits what appears to be an *orans* gesture of prayer (both palms facing outward, spread apart from one another at chest, or waist level). The *orans* posture was a popular expression of Early Christian prayer. It acts as a sign of openness and confidence toward God, yet contrasts, as William FitzGerald notes,

[123] Dante, *Purgatorio*, 11.79-87.

"to a servile posture of a slave before a master or a subject before a sovereign: lying prostrate or kneeling, hands clasped together and eye cast downward."[124] It was later utilized predominately by priests, and symbolized an act of intercession on behalf of the faithful. In fact, the *orans* pose was included as one of the *Nine Ways of Prayer of Saint Dominic* (1260-80) and seemingly indicated a conversation with God:

> At other times he would raise his hands to his shoulders as the priest does at Mass. He appeared then to be listening carefully as if to hear something spoken from the altar. If one had seen his great devotion as he stood erect and prayed, he would certainly have thought that he was observing a prophet, first speaking with an angel or with God himself, then listening, then silently thinking of those things which had been revealed to him.[125]

Both interpretations are befitting to the role of Mary in these images. She is both conversing with God, and she is the intercessor, the vessel through which God will deliver his Son to humankind. Her erect stance and open posture show that she has willingly accepted to receive the Holy Spirit, but are we to imagine this erect pose as the paradigm of humility described by Dante? FitzGerald characterizes the *orans* pose as being the opposite of servitude or subjugation, which prostration would indicate. However, as we seen in Dante's examples to humble oneself is to lower oneself. The very etymology of the term derives from *humus*, or the ground. Mary's verse, calling herself the *ancilla Dei*, the handmaiden of the Lord, is certainly another way in which she demonstrates humility and offers herself in service of God. Although we cannot ascertain

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[124] William FitzGerald, *Spiritual Modalities: prayer as rhetoric and performance* (University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 78-79.

[125] See William Hood, "Saint Dominic's Manners of Praying: Gestures in Fra Angelico's Cell Frescoes at S. Marco." *The Art Bulletin* 68, no. 2 (June 1986): 195–206. See also *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*. Simon Tugwell, editor. The Classics of Western Spirituality. (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

the posture of Dante's Mary with certainty, I have difficulty imagining his version of her standing erect in the *orans* pose. Based on what we read elsewhere in the *Divine Comedy*, and discussed above, I would imagine her pose to be more modest and submissive, while still being dignified, befitting the future Queen of Heaven.

The first Annunciations to exhibit an indisputably polynarrative composition—*i.e.* both the *Ave!* and *Ecce ancilla Dei* moments—can also be found typically among twelfth-century northern European manuscripts (Figure 53-Figure 55). In these images, the protagonists stand facing one another, the angel to the left, and Mary to the right. The angel makes *loquendi* gesture with his right hand; despite his pursed lips, this sign should indicate speech. He may even bear a scroll with the traditional greeting "*Ave gratia plena*..." Mary, in one hand, also bears a scroll with her final reply written upon it, while her free hand is held at chest level with her palm facing outward—almost as if swearing an oath, or a performing a one-handed *orans* gesture. Only her head is bowed slightly in the direction of the angel (and of the Holy Spirit), showing her willing complicity, and perhaps even humility. In terms of the general compositional outline—that is to say, one that simultaneously combines multiple and distinct temporal moments into one cohesive unit—we can conclude that these illuminated pages are, in fact, reminiscent of what Dante describes. However, they do not succeed in communicating the same sense of immediacy and intimacy. They also do not elicit in the viewer, the emotional response experienced by the poet, nor do they explicitly covey the model of humility that Dante's image represents. In the poet's *Annunciation* there is no need for the artificiality of their words, imprinted on *cartigli* (scrolls), to extract the dialogue between Mary and Gabriel.

The carved figures that Dante witnesses are so lifelike, their words are easily interpreted—and even heard, as if spoken—through their body language and the sincerity of their gestures. In the illuminations, however, given that both figures stand erect before one another, I would not classify the angel's gesture as particularly "*soave*." Furthermore, except for her slightly bowed head, Mary's demeanor does not appear to express an extraordinary sense of humility. There is none of the action or emotion that stirs the viewer.

It is not until the beginning of the fourteenth-century that we see a viable candidate for the sort of image that Dante intends (and from which he perhaps drew inspiration). The first contemporary *Annunciation* that truly begins to capture the spirit of the image that Dante imparts through his ekphrasis is that of Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua (1306). Despite their differences of medium, the similarities between the real frescoed image and the imagined relief suggest a striking affinity to one another. An artist renowned for his pioneering portrayals of human emotion, Giotto's innovative interpretation of the *Annunciation* (Figure 56) exhibits the kind of polynarrativity proposed by Dante, but also the naturalism and a quality of intimacy that was previously unknown.

The Scrovegni *Annunciation*

Dedicated to Santa Maria della Carità, both the chapel and Giotto's cycle of frescos pay tribute to the fundamental role of the Virgin Mary in the Christian narrative.

The stories of her parents, Joachim and Anna, and the stories from the life of Mary decorate the upper registers of the nave, while the two middle registers portray moments from the life of Christ, and the lowest registers display the virtues and vices. The liturgical east-end wall of the chapel takes the shape of a great triumphal arch that opens onto the apse. The large barrel-vaulted lunette of the arch—which functions like a symbolic capstone for both the architectural structure of the arch, as well as for the iconographic program—depicts God enthroned and surrounded by his messengers. He is shown in the process of dispatching Gabriel on the Angelic Mission, to deliver his message to Mary.

The Scrovegni *Annunciation* takes a prominent position immediately below the lunette, in the spandrels of the great arch (Figure 56). Like bookends, the scene straddles both sides archway: the angel on the left, and Mary on the right. This particular use of the spandrels of absidal arches for an Annunciation was not unique to Giotto as can be seen in the Palatina Chapel (Figure 44) dating from the1140s. A similar detachment of the two halves of the scene can often be seen spanning the wings of triptychs, or folding travelling altars, as seen in the one mentioned above (Figure 37). Therefore, the spatial distancing between the two halves of the scene was not particularly original, but the impression that the two halves are temporally and spatially unified is clearer and more intimately rendered in Giotto's image.

The open arch physically prevents the union of the two halves. Nevertheless, the gap between them is bridged by an illusion of spatial unity, and thanks to the overwhelming sense of intimacy between the two figures. Like two halves of the same

apple, Mary and Gabriel are nearly mirror images of one another. Except for the small wooden desk near Mary, the architectural space is identical. Clearly the same cartoon was used for both halves of this *Annunciation* scene, as can be attested by reversing one of the halves and superimposing the images (Figure 57). The soft reds and pinks of their robes embroidered with gold, their pale complexions, and even the delicate curls and intricate braids, that respectively frame the faces of the angel and Mary, complement one another to further join the two halves of the scene. Francesco Benelli, in fact, notes the axonometric projection of two halves of the same room and concludes that it "represents the same space in two different frescoes" and that it strengthens the "psychological bond" between the two protagonists.[126] Furthermore, Benelli notes that the same architectural structure can be seen in an adjacent fresco, that of the Wedding Procession in the upper left register. The identical architecture ties the two scenes to a specific place: Mary's home.

Giotto's Annunciation scene has a very performative and theatrical allure; on the far side of each composition, identical curtains have been pulled back and looped around a marble or porphyry column to reveal the "stage". It is as if the two protagonists are having a silent conversation across oppositely situated theater boxes. The heartfelt gestures of their pantomime suggest the well-known dialogue that earlier artists (and some later artists) had felt compelled to write. The seclusion of the interior space gives us the feeling that we are trespassing or eavesdropping on their private moment. The angel is kneeling (finally an *atto soave*!) and his gesture seems gentler and more soft-

[126] See Francesco Benelli, *The Architecture in Giotto's Paintings* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 87-88.

spoken than those of some of his earlier counterparts. Gabriel's right hand is giving the *loquendi* gesture, but his mouth is also open, giving us the undeniable impression that he is in mid-sentence (Figure 58). He also holds a blank scroll in his left hand, but perhaps it serves purely as a symbol of the written Word: God's decree. Brilliant rays of light emanate from his person and illuminate the bare room. On the opposite side, Mary also kneels on one knee and crosses her arms over her chest in a fully humbled, submissive and accepting manner. She leans slightly forward, toward the angel and her gaze is cast faintly downward, looking in the direction of—but not directly at—the angel. Her side of the room is also quite simple, although there is the addition of a small desk and the breviary in her left hand. The Holy Spirit, which so often appears as a white dove, is also absent. Instead of the dove, golden rays of light—coming from the direction of God the Father in the lunette above—flood the room through an unseen window.

There are some notable differences between the two images; Dante's is of course a life-size marble relief carved into the interior wall of the terrace, while Giotto's is a fresco. From the text, Dante's scenes appear to be very large. He mentions that the internal wall of the banked terrace is high and how he must physically advance and reposition himself in front of each scene, suggesting that the reliefs are set within individual frames. Both Botticelli and Signorelli understood this in their interpretations of the scene (Figure 38-Figure 39). They envisioned very large, life-size or greater, single-frame reliefs, depicted at the eye-level of the beholder. Giotto's frescoes are also quite large, measuring 150 x 195 cm. The figures are virtually life-size, but the architectural framework in which they are set is not made to their measure; the setting could not

accommodate them if the figures were to stand. The principal difference between the two *Annunciations* is the physical unity of the scene; Giotto's is divided into two distinct halves. Although it projects the illusion of a unified space and time, the two halves are both laterally and temporally distanced from one another. They are also distanced from the viewer since they are positioned high above eye level.

Despite their minor variations, the greatest traits shared both Giotto's fresco and the ekphrasis of Dante's image is that they express different temporal actions simultaneously, and they display a remarkable sense of naturalism. Giotto's figures offer the illusion and plasticity of three-dimensional forms, but also an emotional range that had not been seen before. They convey an intimacy and an immediacy that renders them convincing actors. Such a level of verisimilitude reminds us of Dante's observations that what he witnessed in God's art would put both Polyclitus and Nature to shame, and that this art was, "*novello a noi perche qui non si trova*" (new to us because it is not found on earth.).[127] Giotto's art was also offering something new and exciting; he was surpassing the representational limitations earlier artists, and Dante was aware of this. Not surprisingly, in the following canto, Dante's conversation with Oderisi da Gubbio will lead them to talk about Giotto as the greatest painter of his era.[128]

The fact that Dante immortalized Giotto in his poem with such high praise, suggests that poet was very impressed with his fellow Tuscan's work. It is generally held among Dante scholars that the two men may have met at some point in 1305-06 when the poet visited Padua. It is, therefore, possible that the two men knew each other, but

[127] Dante, *Purgatorio,* 10.96.
[128] Dante, *Purgatorio,* 11.97-99.

whether some cross-fertilization of ideas regarding the possibilities of visual narration actually took place between them is, unfortunately, impossible to determine. What we do know is that Giotto painted the chapel in between 1304-1306, and Dante, who was in the Veneto (between Verona, Treviso, Padua and Venice) in those same years, was in the process of writing his *Commedia.* There are many striking similarities between their respective *Annunciations* and it is undeniable that there is something new and different in the conceptual arrangements of their compositions that suggests a break with tradition. No matter which image came first, the visual poetics of Dante or the poetic imagery of Giotto, their contributions marked a transformational moment in the history of the pictorial narration. Their polynarrative forms of storytelling, and the emotional impact of their protagonists greatly influenced the next generation of artists, which in the topic of the next section.

The Dante/Giotto legacy

The period of the fourteenth-century immediately following Giotto and Dante was divided among two principal iconographic types of Annunciations. The Giottesque or Florentine school condensed the storyline into the before and after moments. Images of this iconographic type of Annunciation can be found in the *Annunciations* of: Bernardo Daddi (Figure 60) housed at the Louvre (ca. 1335), and in Orcagna's tabernacle (Figure 61) at Orsanmichele in Florence (ca. 1355). Ambrogio Lorenzetti, of the Sienese school, also chose the polynarrative style as can be attested in his *Annunciation* (

Figure 62) at San Galgano (ca. 1334). As a norm, however, the Sienese school exhibited more of a propensity for the *punctum temporis* of the initial "*Ave!"* moment with a hesitant Mary displaying *Conturbatio*, as can be seen in the *Annunciations* of Duccio in the predella panel (Figure 63) from the *Maestà* (1308-1311, Opera del Duomo, Siena), Simone Martini's 1333 altarpiece (Figure 64) at the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, or Barnaba da Siena's fresco (Figure 65) at the Collegiata in San Gimignano (ca. 1340).

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the *Annunciation* was an extremely popular subject. As Fra Roberto categorized (see above), the scene was depicted a wide array of temporal moments from the narrative. The settings also became increasingly decorative, and the gestures and arrangements varied greatly. Though less common, the initial "*Ave!*" moment with a hesitant Mary still existed in some well-known Florentine examples: Ghiberti's bronze relief (Figure 66) on the north doors of the Baptistery (ca. 1404-24); Donatello's 1435 *Cavalcanti Annunciation* (Figure 67) at Santa Croce, Filippo Lippi's *Martelli Annunciation* (Figure 68) of 1445 in the Basilica of San Lorenzo, and Botticelli's *Cestello Annunciation* (Figure 69) at the Uffizi Gallery (ca. 1489). All of these compositions depict Mary fleeing or withdrawing from the intruding angel.

Another new variant of the theme that became popular throughout the Quattrocento was the depiction of the final actions: the "*Ecce ancilla Dei"* or Incarnation. In these compositions, the angel has finished speaking and assumes a reverent and accepting pose, similar to that of Mary: with a bowed head and arms crossed over his chest. This can be seen in several of the *Annunciations* by Fra Angelico, for example at Santa Maria delle Grazie in San Giovanni Valdarno (Figure 71), 1432 and in the frescos of the 1440s at the Convent of San Marco in Florence (Figure 72). Likewise it can be found among the numerous *Annunciations* of Fra Filippo Lippi (Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome ca. 1445-50 [Figure 73]; National Gallery, London ca. 1450 [Figure 75]; Duomo of Spoleto, 1467-69 [Figure 74]), and in that Piero della Francesca's *St. Anthony polyptych* (Figure 76) of 1470 at the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia, Italy.

Between 1480 and 1485, the depiction of another moment which I will call the "pre-*Ave!"* appears in compositions such as Benedetto da Maiano's relief for the Mastrogiudici Chapel altarpiece (Figure 77) from the late 1480s in Sant'Anna dei Lombardi, Naples; Lorenzo di Credi's Uffizi *Annunciation* (Figure 78) from the early 1480s, and Botticelli's San Martino della Scala fresco (Figure 79) of 1481, now housed at the Uffizi. These images appear to show the angel before his address to Mary. He is shown either not quite landed, or in the act of kneeling, and his expression seems to suggest that he is just about to speak; his arms are crossed over his chest in a submissive and endearing gesture. This is possibly another sort of polynarrative moment since, in these images, we note that Mary is not fearful, but very worshipful, with the exception of the Lorenzo di Credi where her expression is somewhat inquisitive or even amused.

The combined polynarrative arrangement that exemplify the spirit of Dante and Giotto's compositions can be found in several Quattrocento images. Masolino's *Annunciation* (Figure 80) at the Castiglione Chapel, San Clemente, Rome (1425-31), also painted in the spandrels of an arch, recalls Giotto's image. Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* (Figure 81) included in his the *Scenes from the Life of Christ* at San Marco, Florence (1451-52), Ghirlandaio's mosaic (Figure 82) on the Porta della Mandorla, of the Florence Duomo (ca. 1489); and a predella image by Botticelli (
Figure **83**) at the Uffizi Gallery (1490-92) are but a few of the images that continue to combine the angel's message with Mary's humble acceptance.

Fra Angelico's 1434 *Annunciation* in Cortona (Figure **84**), offers a further evolution of the polynarrative image. As we have seen in some of the examples above, a majority of Fra Angelico's *Annunciations* depict the moment of the Incarnation. Mary and the angel have finished speaking and they both bow their heads as Mary welcomes the Holy Spirit. In the Cortona image, Angelico has undoubtedly combined part of the Angelic Colloquy with the "*Ecce ancilla Dei"* moment. We know this beyond a doubt because the artist has in shown the words that Gabriel speaks to the Virgin. Rather than using the most commonly depicted initial greeting ("*Ave gratia plena, Dominus tecum"*), Fra Angelico takes us to a point in the middle of the conversation, spelling out part of the verse, Luke 1:35: "*Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te / et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi"* (the holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most high shall overshadow thee). Angelico has split the verse into two registers that emanate from the Angel. Mary's final response (Luke 1:38) "E*cce ancilla Domini fiat mihi secundum*

verbum tuum) is written across the scene backward in respect to the viewer (to show their directionality) and is placed between the two halves of the angel's message (Figure 85). The artist has thus condensed yet a different instant of the colloquy and the final response of the narrative to one visual instant. Despite their pursed lips, the written text adds the audible element of conversation to the composition and as such, a dimension of time. In Giotto and Dante's versions, the conversation had been implied through gesture alone. The explicit inclusion of the written text guides the viewers' unmistakable reading of the abridged version of the scene from the gospel of Luke. But there is still more to this composition; this painting is also polyscenic, it includes a second narrative.

As noted above in the introduction, in the background (Figure 86) Fra Angelico has included a depiction of the Expulsion from Eden: an event which took place long before the Annunciation.[129] The inclusion of the Expulsion creates a temporal bridge and causality between these two events. It also fills Mary and Gabriel's exchange of words with even greater significance. It infuses the narrative with typological meaning that charges Gabriel's decree with redemptive gravitas and Mary's response with rediscovered humility. It represents a second chance, one that is sealed with Mary's humble words and unconditional acceptance. The addition of second narrative within the frame acts as a sort of hypertext link. The simultaneous joining the two historically distinct moments lengthens the intrinsic timeline of the painting; it links a problem from the distant past to the present action, which in turn implies the future solution. The

[129] According to *The Golden Legend* (vol. III, chapter 19), the creation of Man and his subsequent Fall, occurred on March 25, the same calendar day of the Annunciation, as well as an array of other memorable events.

connections between these distant narratives must be made through the intervention and the contemplation of the spectator.

In Fra Angelico's Prado *Annunciation* of 1426 (Figure 87) the temporal moment chosen is, again, the moment of the Incarnation. Both the angel and Mary have finished speaking and with heads bow their heads and arms folded in reverence, Mary prepares to receive the Holy Spirit. This particular painting, like the Cortona altarpiece, also suggests a prophecy and the fulfillment of a destiny, via the inclusion of a prominent Expulsion scene, placed to the left, in the background. Therefore the "present"—shown in the correct reading order on the right—is represented by Mary and the Angel, enacting the final moment of the Annunciation. It symbolizes the moment of deliverance from mankind's fall from grace, referenced by the Expulsion. Even the near and distant future can be seen in the symbols of the white dove, the Holy Spirit, making his way toward Mary, but also in the inclusion of the swallow resting on the metal crossbar of the arch. The swallow expresses a double symbolism; it is a symbol of the Incarnation as it was thought to hibernate in its mud nest through the winter—a sort of gestational period, but it also symbolizes Resurrection and Rebirth because it returns in the spring.[130] In this way, the symbol of the swallow extends the timeline to a more distant future by implying the pre-ordained future of Christ, who has not even yet entered Mary's womb. The juxtaposition of the two temporally and textually distinct events succeeds in extending

[130] See George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (New York. Oxford University Press, 1959), 25.

this narrative beyond Luke 1:26-38 (and here, it is really only verse 38- *Ecce ancilla dei*) by directly connecting it, through typology, to a narrative moment in the book of Genesis.

In contrast to the Prado or the Cortona *Annunciations* with their polynarrative time, Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* (Figure 72) of 1443 at San Marco exhibits a temporal expression more indicative of a single suspended moment, with no secondary narratives or added symbols to suggest them. The simplicity of the San Marco fresco is suited to its location and function: an image of contemplation, located in the private space of the Dominican convent. The Cortona and Prado altarpieces, in contrast, were located in public spaces (the Chiesa del Gesù, and the Church of San Domenico in Fiesole, respectively). Their compositional complexity and utilization of symbols, all of which could be unpacked through discussion, served a more explicit didactic role which would have reflected the public locations of these works.

We have seen in this chapter how artists have succeeded in manipulating the temporal aspects of a narrative in order to convey specific messages to their audiences. Dante's fictive relief suggests polynarrativity because it collapses two narrative moments into one simultaneous vision. The poet's example suggests a form of visual narration that mimics a duration of action. In Dante's time, as we have seen in the examples listed above, there were images that paired the *Ave!* and *Ecce ancilla dei* moments into a single composition, and they were found predominately in illuminated manuscripts. Dante's concept of composition, however, extends beyond what is merely representational. Within his imagined relief a narrative unfolds; there is an aspect of performed action conveyed through the proximity, the bearing and the communication between the figures.

Whether Dante's description of an imagined relief served as a compositional model, or whether it was informed by an innovative work he may have seen, is impossible to know. But it is remarkable to note the similarities between what the poet describes and what Giotto painted in his contemporary Scrovegni *Annunciation* 1304-1306. The legacy of their compositional innovation, as noted above, paved the way for new combinations of temporal moments drawn both from within the same text, as well as expanded to other textual sources. In the next chapter, we will examine how artists utilized these polynarrative means in the iconographic tradition of a more complex but related Marian theme: the *Nativity*.

Chapter 3: Combining Narrative Sources to Create Implied Timelines

In the previous chapter we have seen how, through polynarrative compositions— i.e. the simultaneous juxtaposing of temporally distinct moments of a narrative— some artists were able to produce a sense of temporal continuity. Instead of choosing one precise moment to represent the event, multiple points of the narrative were chosen, perhaps to show the progression of the narrative from point A to point B. We also examined Fra Angelico's use of multi-text polynarrativity in his Cortona and Prado *Annunciations*. Rather than displaying different two moments of the same narrative, the artist effectively extended the intrinsic timeline within his painting by linking discrete, temporally distant actions from multiple narratives in order to underscore their typological connection to one another. Both of these polynarrative means succeed in recontextualizing and repackaging the lengthier narrative into a convenient and dynamic single-frame image.

The stories regarding the birth of Christ are another set of popular Marian narratives that were traditionally combined iconographically. The primary source for the story is the Gospel of Luke 2:1-20. The Nativity narrative recounts Mary and Joseph's peregrinations from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register with the census. In Bethlehem, Mary's child is born: "she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7). The rather lengthy set of verses that follow (Luke 2:8-20) recounts how angels appeared to the shepherds and brought them the news of the birth of the Savior. The

mere mention of Christ's name sparked a heavenly chorus of the *Gloria,* thereby prompting the shepherds to seek out the child.

Long before the Quattrocento it was common to see the Nativity depicted together with either the Annunciation to the Shepherds and/or the Adoration of the Shepherds as one simultaneous event. The source text suggests that the angels appeared to the shepherds on the same day of the birth of Christ: "for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). However, it is unclear from the text whether the Birth of Christ and the Annunciation to the Shepherds were precisely concurrent. The rapid succession of these actions in the text suggests that if they were not concurrent, they at least happened within a relatively short span of time to one another. The Adoration of the Shepherds is undoubtedly subsequent to the first two actions (the Birth of Christ and the Annunciation to the Shepherds). The proximity of these events, both within the text and chronologically as a historic event, is perhaps one of the reasons artists often depicted this chain of individual moments together within the same frame.

The gospel account is predominately androcentric; it centers on Joseph's lineage and the reason for *his* having brought Mary to Bethlehem. It also places a great deal of importance on the role of the shepherds as the first witnesses to the birth of Christ. Mary is hardly mentioned at all; except to say that she was betrothed to Joseph, was with child, and while in Bethlehem, gave birth (verses 5-7). One other mention at verse 19 relates how she pondered in her heart the optimistic things the shepherds were saying about the child. The visual tradition, on the other hand, focuses on the miraculous birth of the child, and the crucial role of Mary in the Christian narrative.

A particularly popular subject in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Italy, the standard iconography of the Nativity still observed many of the traditional Byzantine characteristics that respected the fundamental importance of the Virgin Mother. In Byzantine works, a larger-than-life Mary, as Theotokos (the one who gave birth to God) is generally placed at the center of the composition, resting in a recumbent position. Next to her, laying in the manger, is the child swaddled in white cloth. Mary is usually depicted either holding her son or placing him in the manger; nearby, an ox and a donkey observe the child.[131] In the Byzantine tradition, Mother and child are often shown at the entrance to a grotto. The darkness of the cave represents the spiritual darkness into which man had fallen while the whiteness of the child represents the light of a new hope—perhaps in reference to John 12:46.[132] These opposing details of darkness and whiteness may also foreshadow Christ's tomb and the winding cloth used to wrap him.

The men, whose roles were more central to the biblical account, assume a less prominent role in the visual tradition. Joseph is often found in a corner of the foreground, smaller in size and on a lower plane than Mary. He is certainly more a contemplative presence than an active participant in the pictorial tradition. Joseph is usually depicted in a state of self-absorbed thought, cheek propped up by his hand, sometimes staring off in a certain direction, or even asleep. The shepherds are typically shown either in the right foreground or background. At times they are receiving the message of the angels, while, in other instances, they are just arriving at the location of

[131] The detail of the ox and the ass is not mentioned in the canonical gospels but in the apocryphal accounts. It may be taken from the opening lines of Isaiah's prophecy: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:3)

[132] "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." (John 12:46)

the child or kneeling before him in adoration. Often these Nativity scenes are represented as continuous narratives that combine the actions of the verses in Luke 2:7-20. To achieve this narrative continuity, the shepherds will often appear twice: both in the background receiving the good news and again at the foreground, adoring the child. Likewise, the infant Jesus is also often represented twice: lying in the manger, and being bathed by two attendants.

Dating around 1260, Nicola Pisano's continuous narrative relief on the pulpit of the Baptistery in Pisa, (Figure 88) simultaneously depicts the Christ child being bathed by attendants, and again lying in the manger. The image is a tightly woven mélange of layers that highlight the centrality of Mary's role in the events from the Annunciation to the Adoration of the Shepherds. As noted in the previous chapter, in the upper left corner we see the Annunciation, undoubtedly depicting the "*Ave!*" moment, as Mary timidly withdraws from the approaching angel. At the center, another Mary—shown post-partum and much larger than the other figures—reclines in the fashion of a Roman matron on a triclinium. Below, two attendants bathe the child, and a flock of sheep gathers in the lower right corner. Joseph sits in the lower left-hand corner and stares pensively, almost melancholically, off into the distance, past the spectator.[133] Behind Mary, the infant Christ appears again this time swaddled in the manger while two angels stand over him. The ox, ass, and shepherds—now, unfortunately headless—would have looked upon the

[133] Although such a scene is not mentioned in the Gospel of Luke or other canonical accounts, there is mention of Joseph bringing two midwives (Zelomi and Salome) to assist Mary in the apocryphal Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew. It was a detail often added to the Nativity scenes from as early as the fifth century until the fourteenth century. The common practice of cleansing the child after birth may symbolize the human nature of Christ. It pairs nicely with its counterpart, the contemplative Joseph who ponders the miraculous conception and birth, and therefore, the divinity of Christ.

child in adoration. This continuous relief panel succeeds in combining key moments of the stories of both Luke 1 and Luke 2, however, the simultaneous repetition of the figures, and the absolute lack of a credible and livable space, create a temporal impasse among the actions.

Toward the end of the Duecento, the iconography of the Nativity underwent some alterations. The depiction of the dark cave gave way to the wooden structure of the stable. Likewise, the inclusion of the two midwives, as well as the repetition of the child, became less common over the course of the Trecento. In Duccio's *Nativity* panel (Figure 89) for the predella of the *Maestà* (1308-1311), he combined old and new. He joined the novelty of the wooden stable with the dark grotto, typical of traditional Byzantine iconography.[134] The dark recesses of the grotto, framed by the structure of the stable, create a stark contrast with the focal point of the painting (the child), but also a convenient niche to showcase Mother and Child. All of the other figures, except the ox and the ass, are busy performing their activities outside, and separately from, this space. The composition does not suggest any clear sense of narrative order among the actions of these secondary players. Everyone's actions seem to occur as if in their own individual bubbles of time and space.

In the Scrovegni Chapel *Nativity* (Figure 90), Giotto departed from the traditional Byzantine style Nativity.[135] Like several of his Arena Chapel compositions, the Nativity

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[134] This panel from the front predella is now housed in the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

[135] See James H. Stubblebine, *Giotto: The Arena Chapel Frescoes* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969);
See also Andrew Ladis, *The Arena Chapel and the Genius of Giotto: Padua* (New York: Garland Pub., 1998); Giuseppe Basile, *Giotto, the Arena Chapel Frescoes* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993); Bruce Cole, *Giotto: The Scrovegni Chapel, Padua* (New York: George Braziller, 1993).

is set up as a sequential narrative. Without resorting to the repetition of the continuous narrative, Giotto represents the Nativity on the left and the Annunciation to the shepherds on the right. The focal point of his composition (Mother and Child) has been shifted to the left, almost as if rotated on its axis. In classic Giotto style, the monumentality of his figures cannot be contained within the visual field of the window-like frame. They spill over beyond the edge, giving the spectator the sense that the scene continues behind the structural framing, to join the subsequent image: *The Adoration of the Magi*.

Giotto's composition simultaneously portrays two distinct events from the narrative within the same frame. However, it does not present them as a single, cohesive experience. There is a perceptible division between the two halves of the scene. In his *Annunciation* of the same chapel, despite the physical separation between Mary and Gabriel, there was a strong sense of their connection and complicity in a mutual experience. In the *Nativity,* there does not appear to be any shared connection between the manger group and the Shepherds. That is not to say that the protagonists lack a psychological autonomy or emotional level, but rather that each half appears to function independently. Each of the figures exhibits a natural emotional reaction with respect to their personal events unfolding within their separate halves of the frame. Temporally speaking, each appears to be 'in the moment,' as it were. To the far left, partially cut off by the frame, we can glimpse just the arm and the lovely profile of a midwife, who enters the scene to carefully hand the child to Mary. The freshly swaddled infant, and the midwife's entrance from the left side of the "stage," give us the sense that perhaps the

child has just been bathed, beyond our field of sight.[136] It is an action both suitable and natural; not only does it enhance the intimacy of the scene, it ingeniously solves the problem of having to depict the Christ child twice in the same frame. Mother and child look at each other intensely and lovingly; there is a sense of complicity between them.[137] Both Mary and the nurse give their full attention to the infant. The donkey and the ox now stand with their backs toward the spectator and like the nurse are also partially obscured by the framing; their focus, however, is on the interaction between mother and child. Joseph is the only fully isolated figure; with his eyes half-closed he appears lost in his own thoughts.

The absence of interaction between the protagonists on the left and the right gives the sensation that there is an invisible but impenetrable wall dividing the two halves of the scene. Despite their proximity to the Holy Family, and their seemingly unobstructed view, the shepherds do not appear to acknowledge their neighbors. Instead, their focus is trained on the angel who is announcing the good tidings. All the other angels look up toward Heaven, except the one in the center who looks down upon the intimate maternal scene. The only real connecting hinge between the two halves of the image might be found among the shepherd's flock of sheep. With a certain amount of human-like curiosity, one of the ewes cranes her neck upward to look at mother and child.

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[136] Stubblebine refers to this abridged vision of the midwives as a mere allusion to the "traditional episode or subplot (...) [that] symbolizes[s] the rite of baptism" (82). As mentioned in note 133, the detail of the midwives was never mentioned in the canonical gospels, but acts perhaps as a nod to the apocryphal gospels, and also to earlier iconographic traditions.

[137] Stubblebine notes the similar positions of Mother and Child in both the *Nativity* and the *Pietà* on the adjacent wall. The similar compositions are in dialogue with one another, projecting toward the future and reflecting on the past, respectively (82).

Followers of Giotto created versions of the Nativity on a similar horizontal axis, for example, the *Nativity* in the Lower Church of Assisi, ca. 1315 (Figure 91). Like the Arena Chapel fresco, both the Nativity and the Annunciation to the Shepherds are depicted simultaneously, on the same pictorial plane. Spatially and temporally the composition still appears to be sequential, and the events, separated by an invisible wall. Although the figures appear to share the same space, their actions seem disconnected from one another. The child is depicted twice: with the midwives and again in the manger. The Assisi composition also does not convey the same emotional intimacy that united many of the figures in a shared moment. Padua fresco in creating a clear order of progression and timeline of the narrative events.

The first half of the fourteenth century witnessed several further innovations in the iconography of the Nativity. Among the first was a change in Mary's pose from reclining on a mattress, or sitting upright on the ground, to a position of humble genuflection over the child. Such an innovation can be seen in Bernardo Daddi's *Nativity* from the San Pancrazio polyptych ca. 1338 (Figure 92). In contrast to Giotto's horizontal arrangement, which presents the illusion of temporal and spatial unity, Daddi utilizes the vertical axis of the painting to create a greater sense of distance between the manger scene in the foreground and shepherds in the background. Daddi creates this detachment through a primitive use of perspective. His image suggests that the two events might actually be concurrent, although distanced by space. The rocky hillside, where we see the Holy Family accompanied by the music of a host of angels, divides the panel into two distinct areas. The crag appears to rise above the space of the valley, which is occupied

by the shepherds and their flock. The rock face also shields them from the shepherds' sight. The angel in the background, camouflaged by the gold leaf, brings the news to one of the shepherds while his two companions play music and attend to the flock. In the foreground, Mary—no longer resting in bed, but kneeling before the manger—wraps her newborn child in cloth, thereby enacting the angel's description of Luke 2:7-12:

> [7] And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. [8] And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. [9] And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. [10] And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. [11] For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. [12] And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.[138]

Bernardo Daddi's composition—like many others that followed—attempts a more elaborate depiction of the scene as it is recounted in the Gospel of Luke. The principal narrative of the passage is the angel's revelation, his Annunciation to the shepherds. In Daddi's panel, the angel's annunciation is almost an unseen background detail, but the foreground illustrates, more importantly, the details of the angel's message. The actions of these two distinct spaces might be read as simultaneous to one another. In the narrative text of the gospel, the angel's message conjures the image for the reader: the rustic setting, the manger, the infant bundled in swaddling cloth, and Mary watching over him. The image of "the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" is, in fact, the *sign.* It is the means by which the shepherds will identify the child and will confirm the truth of the angel's revelation.

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[138] New International Version, Luke 2:7-12.

The two actions are, therefore, distanced by space, but not necessarily by time. In a manner of speaking, they are two sides of a narrative coin, co-existing on a shared pictorial plane. Rather than place both the Shepherds and the Holy Family on the same pictorial plane—as his predecessors such as Giotto and Duccio had done—Daddi has attempted to create a more convincing view of the two parallel, yet spatially distinct actions. The bird's-eye vantage point of the perspective provides the spectator a line of sight which goes past the rocky crag to the pastures beyond. In contrast to the works of some of his contemporaries, Daddi has not depicted both the Annunciation and the Adoration of the Shepherds as a continuous narrative, nor has he depicted each event as a sequential frame by frame.[139] Instead of showing us two different narratives, or even two different moments of a single narrative, he shows us the possibility of one narrative moment, simultaneously observed from two different locations.

Other artists seem to have followed in Daddi's path with similar compositional arrangements, *i.e*. the Nativity in the foreground with the Annunciation seen as a distant background detail. This type of organization can be seen in Lorenzo Monaco's *Nativity* in the predella of the *Coronation of the Virgin* at the Uffizi Gallery 1414 (Figure 93), and in Gentile da Fabriano's *Nativity* (Figure 94) in the predella of the Strozzi Altarpiece

[139] For the combination *Annunciation to the Shepherds/Adoration of the Shepherds*, see Taddeo Gaddi's panel at the, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, ca.1330, or any of Bartolo di Fredi's panels, which are stylistically quite similar: 1374, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; 1380s panel in the Pinacoteca of the Vatican, or the 1390s panels at Avignon, Musée du Petit Palais, and the Church of Saints Flora and Lucilla, Torrita di Siena. For a Contemporary frame-by-frame composition of the Birth of Christ Narrative, Taddeo Gaddi's south wall of the Baroncelli chapel in Santa Croce, Florence is a prime example. The six fields, divided in three registers, and divided by a large stained glass bifora, depict: the *Annunciation* (upper left of the lunette), the *Visitation* (upper right of the lunette), the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* (center left), the *Nativity/Adoration of the Shepherds* (center right), *the Appearance of the Star in the East* (lower left), the *Adoration of the Magi* (lower right).

(1423).[140] In contrast to Bernardo Daddi, the examples of Gentile and Lorenzo Monaco are painted on horizontal panels, rather that vertical panels, typical of the shape of predellas. The horizontal plane leaves less room to develop the sense of a deep background in which to situate the Annunciation to the Shepherds. Nonetheless, both artists have represented it on a separate plane, placed behind the principle manger scene. Another departure from Bernardo Daddi's panel is that the works of Lorenzo Monaco and Gentile da Fabriano depict a nocturnal setting, exhibiting a greater level of accuracy regarding the source text: "and there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night".[141] Such consideration of the text and attention to detail may indicate a desire to identify a specific *punctum temporis* of the narrative.

Although their interpretations of the text are very accurate in one aspect, the Nativity scenes of Lorenzo Monaco and Gentile da Fabriano are not entirely faithful to the source text on all accounts. Lorenzo Monaco departs slightly from the text by removing the swaddling cloth from the Christ child, a characteristic that seems to manifest around the last two decades of the Trecento.[142] Gentile da Fabriano's

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140 There are two other predella panels by Lorenzo Monaco with similar compositions: from the Santa Maria del Carmine altarpiece, ca. 1390, housed at the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, and a 1406-1410 predella panel, housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which possibly belonged the *Annunciation* altarpiece at the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.

141 Luke 2:8. The nocturnal scene is trait most likely borrowed from Taddeo Gaddi's *Annunciation to the Shepherds* in the Baroncelli chapel (ca. 1330) of Santa Croce in Florence.

142 Lorenzo Monaco's earlier Nativity dating about 1390 (Staatliche Museen, Berlin) still exhibits a tightly swaddled child, whose mother tickles him lovingly. The subsequent early Quattrocento Nativities dating between 1405-1423 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Uffizi Gallery, Florence; Accademia Gallery, Florence) present a naked Christ child. The *Nativity* by Altichiero da Zevio in Padova's Oratorio di San Giorgio (ca 1380) depicts a Christ child covered in a sheer, gossamer-like fabric. Likewise, the Nativity of Ugolino di Prete Ilario in Orvieto also exhibits a nearly naked child, although it may be difficult to know how the original version appeared since there have been numerous restorations over the centuries.

interpretation is in many ways similar to that of Lorenzo Monaco. It also represents a very close reading of Luke 2:7-12, but deviates in its inclusion of the midwives—present in all four of his infancy of Christ scenes on the *Strozzi Altarpiece.* The inclusion of the midwives harkens back to earlier Byzantine-inspired iconographies and apocryphal texts. The presence of the midwives in Gentile's *Nativity* does not, however, disturb the temporal unity of the painting. The women are depicted as perfectly synchronized to the moment depicted. Unlike earlier images in which they are shown bathing the child, in Gentile's Nativity, one sleeps while the leans forward and smiles as she admires Mary adoring the infant Christ. In a manner akin to the servant woman in Giotto's Arena Chapel *Nativity*, the midwives in Gentile's composition add a very domestic and natural element to the scene.

Gentile's *Nativity* is particularly beautiful for its use light, which enhances the temporal placement of the scene at night. The contrasting light and dark areas provide a sort of dialogic link between the powerful and startling appearance of the Angel to the Shepherds in the background, and the otherwise peaceful and silent foreground. God's two envoys, the angel as the messenger, and the Christ child as God incarnate, represent the two sources of illumination but also the Light: of the Word of God. As the brightest points of the composition, they light up all that surrounds them. The intensity of the light seems to relate directly to the intensity of the emotional atmosphere of each side of this narrative coin. The blast of radiance in the background emphasizes the angel's joyous announcement to the startled Shepherds. In the foreground, the warm golden glow of the unswaddled infant Christ illuminates the quiet smiles of mother and child, as well as

those of the midwife and the animals that lovingly observe them. The silence of the foreground is also underscored by the slumbering figures of Joseph and the other midwife. The dichotomy between the bright light and sudden announcement in the background and the warm glowing light and silence in the foreground, make it even clearer to the spectator that space distances the two depicted events. The two light sources connect both the foreground and background while the spatial separation allows the spectator to appreciate the synchronicity of the two events.

Although these iconographic innovations are intriguing from a stylistic standpoint, how do they relate to polynarrativity? If we interpret Luke 2:8-12 as two sides of a narrative coin—one side depicting the angel speaking to the Shepherds, and the other side depicting the scene he describes to them ("the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger")—they co-exist temporally, but they do not share the same space. The novelty of the composition would, therefore, reside in the ability of these artists to successfully showcase both sides of that coin simultaneously, but in a manner that appears natural. The spatial distance creates that natural barrier between them, something that Giotto's composition could not because both actions appeared on the same pictorial plane and thus, appeared to share the same space. The polynarrative aspect is then the ability to view a unique narrative moment from multiple perspectives. If, on the other hand, we consider the manger scene and the Annunciation to the Shepherds as non-concurrent events (i.e. if we consider them both temporally and spatially distinct), then, like the Annunciations discussed in Chapter 2, we could characterize these compositions as depicting two temporally distinct moments of a single narrative.

In the case of Fra Angelico's Prado and Cortona *Annunciations* the polynarrative element came, not from the combination of temporally distinct moments of the same narrative, but from a combination of narratives—the Expulsion from the Garden and the Annunciation—which are cosmically connected, though distanced by time. We find a similar combination of sources in Nativity narratives that also include the Adoration of the Magi: a union of narratives that are related, but unquestionably divided by time.

Combining narrative in images of the Magi

In the gospels, there are two accounts of the birth of Christ. The story of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12) relates the Nativity story from another perspective. The narrative recounts how the Magi witnessed the appearance of star at the moment of the birth of Christ. The portent of the star prompted their journey to toward Bethlehem and through Jerusalem, stopping for an audience with King Herod, before finally arriving at the location of the child. In the Italian pictorial tradition, the episode of the Epiphany, or Adoration of the Magi, was generally depicted as an event that was both separate from, and subsequent to, the Nativity and the Annunciation to the Shepherds. Duccio's predella for the *Maestà* (Figure 95), or Altichiero da Zevio's *Infancy of Christ* cycle in the Oratory of S. Giorgio in Padua, ca. 1380 (Figure 96), offer clear examples of the distinction between the two episodes. Mapping out a timeline of the infancy of Christ, the Adoration of the Magi is generally considered an event that occurred between the Circumcision and before the Flight to Egypt in Matthew 2:13-14. According to Jewish

tradition and the verse Luke 2:21, circumcisions are performed on the eighth day after the child's birth. As such, it would stand to reason that the Magi arrived sometime after the eighth day. Examples such as Ugolino di Prete Ilario's frescoes in the apse of the Duomo in Orvieto (Figure 98), as well as Fra Angelico's *Scenes from the Life of Christ* (Figure 97), display such an ordering of events.

Among the Italian tradition, we do not witness a seamless combination of the Birth of Christ narratives contained in the two canonical gospels (i.e. a melding of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi) until the end of the Quattrocento. There are, however, images from among the Byzantine tradition that do unite elements of both canonical and apocryphal texts, in particular, the Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew. These Byzantine compositions typically combine in the same pictorial space: the Nativity (Luke 2:7), the Washing of Christ (Ps-Mt. 13), the Annunciation to the Shepherds (Luke, 2:8-12) the Rejoicing of the angels (Luke 2:13-14), the Adoration of the shepherds (Luke 2:15-20) and the Contemplation of Joseph (Matt 2:13) with the Journey of the Magi (Matt 2:11) and/or the Adoration of the Magi (Matt 2:1-10). With little regard for the spatial or temporal disparity of the single events, these jumbled continuous narratives are merely symbolic representations of the events of Christ's birth. They are, however, some of the first attempts to present a more comprehensive view of the narratives related to the Infancy of Christ.

One of the oldest and grandest examples of a combined Infancy of Christ composition is found on the east wall of the south transept of Palermo's Cappella Palatina. This large twelfth-century mosaic (Figure 99) spans the entire center register on

the east wall, spilling over onto the south wall as well (Figure 100).[143] At the center of the composition, the traditional Mary Theotokos reclines at the mouth of a dark cave, with the infant in her arms. In the foreground below, we see the midwives bathing the child in a basin on the right, while, on the left, Joseph sits and contemplates. The ox and ass stand behind the manger and observe the child. The star is located above them. In the upper right, on the south wall of the transept, the angel makes his announcement to the shepherds. The Magi are depicted twice: following the star on the right, and offering gifts on the left. We can find evidence of very similar compositions among illuminations in fourteenth-century Byzantine manuscripts (Figures 101; 102). The illuminations and the Palatina mosaic are continuous narratives that share a very similar iconographic compositions, none of which presents the events in a clear reading order. While the compositions do exhibit slight variations, the overall layout remains constant. The variations include: a swap the positions of Joseph and that of the midwives; or a single appearance of the Magi, either on horseback or bearing gifts, typically positioned on the left.

In the Palatina Chapel, the framing of the pictorial panel visibly delineates all of these stories as a single unit. They all pertain to a certain theme: the Nativity of the Lord. In the lower right-hand corner, the framing intrusively overlaps the pictorial space of a later story (the Baptism of Christ), clearly marking the distinct grouping together of these narratives. A series of colored fields divide the background and provide separate fields for each episode. The scene with Mary, Joseph, and the manger have a rocky hill for a

[143] The upper register features a lunette of the Pantocator, while an image of St. Paul decorates the alcove below.

backdrop. The midwives bathe the child set against a grassy knoll. Hillocks of different shades of green, brown and gold form the backdrops for the each of the other groups of figures. It is almost as if each unit were acting as a unique verse, and yet, the overlapping details link them together to form a cohesive narrative.

A rare fourteenth-century panel, attributed to the artist known as Pietro da Rimini, dating ca. 1330 (Figure 103), exhibits a combination of narratives similar to the contemporary Eastern illuminations (Figures 101; 102). Often labeled a *giottesco*, in this particular panel, Pietro da Rimini appears to have drawn inspiration from the Byzantine styles that flourished on the coastal cities of Romagna. The various narrative episodes function as purely representational and do not suggest any clear sense of progression or chronology. Each element functions independently of the others without any regard for the temporal order of events. One departure from the Byzantine style is the artist's attention to the creation of a more organic and unified landscape; a trait that may have been learned from studying the works of Giotto. Similar to Giotto's *Nativity* in the Scrovegni Chapel, Pietro da Rimini has also rotated the axis of the composition. The Holy Family has been shifted the right, while the shepherds and the Magi, approach from the left. Joseph sits in the lower foreground with his back toward the spectator. His hands are clasped in prayer, and his face is seen in a *profil perdu* as he looks upward toward the angel, referencing the Contemplation of Joseph from Matthew 2:13.[144]

[144] "When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'"

Despite some lingering archaic traits, Pietro da Rimini's composition represents a step in the direction of a more comprehensive amalgamation of the multiple narratives relating the infancy of Christ.[145] His attention to a unified setting, despite its modernity, does not help to distinguish a clear reading order of the events. Presented simultaneously, and on the same plane, they can only symbolically represent a series of events from the narrative, without clearly linking the connections between them. Through most of the Quattrocento, artists continued to depict the two gospel narratives of the Nativity separately. The account in Luke 2 (the Nativity, the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Adoration of the Shepherds) was depicted separately from the account in Matthew 2 (the Appearance of the Star, the Journey of the Magi, and the Adoration of the Magi). It was not until the end of the fifteenth century that any modern artist attempts a weave of both Luke 2 and Matthew 2. The artist who succeeded in creating such an image was Domenico del Ghirlandaio (1449-1494).

Ghirlandaio's Sassetti *Adoration*

Domenico del Ghirlandaio's 1485 *Adoration of the Shepherds* (Figure 104), located in the Sassetti Chapel of Santa Trinita in Florence, is a vibrant example of a temporally progressive polynarrative image that is unified and cohesive in its

[145] By no means was Pietro da Rimini the first Italian to pictorially combine the various narratives. However, examples such as the *Nativity/Adoration of the Magi* panels by Giotto (1320, Metropolitan Museum of New York), or Giovanni Baronzio (1325, Courtauld Institute), present the Adoration of the Magi as the focal scene, while the chronologically earlier scene of the Annunciation to the Shepherds, unfolds in the background. In Baronzio's composition the foreground also depicts Joseph standing (not sitting) over the midwives who bathe the child, adjacent to the two pages that tend to the Magi's horses, creating several temporal inconsistencies.

composition.[146] Despite the title given to this work, Ghirlandaio's altarpiece manages to depict far more than the Adoration of the Shepherds. It is a seamless weave of actions from both Luke 2 and Matthew 2, combined into a single image. The temporally distinct events, drawn from separate narrative sources, are combined to function with one another, in harmony. Ghirlandaio, as we shall see ahead, succeeds in effectively lengthening the intrinsic timeline of his narrative episode. He does so through the inclusion of symbols and other hypertexts, which link the events within the *Adoration* to future events, but also to events from the past, charging them with typological significance.

The monumental figures in the foreground—Mary on the left, and the humble, adoring shepherds on the right—form the central theme of painting and draw the spectator into the scene. At the base of the pyramid they form, the pale skin of the Christ child contrasts sharply with Mary's dark blue cloak. The sharp contrast draws the eye of the viewer. The presence of the child also draws the attentions of every man, woman, and beast in the foreground; everyone except Joseph focuses on the child. Joseph's attention appears to have been momentarily distracted by the imminent arrival of a throng of approaching and adoring fans, some on horseback others on foot. Most are dressed in very fine clothing and are accompanied by servants. Three crowned men (one young, one

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[146] Jeanne K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (Yale University Press, 2000); Eve Borsook and Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence: History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel.* (Doornspijk, Holland: Davaco Publ., 1981); These works are greatly indebted to Aby Warburg's scholarship on the Sassetti chapel and Francesco Sassetti: "The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoise," (1902) and, "Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunction to his Sons," (1907) published in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1932) and his book *La rinascita del paganesimo antico* (La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1966).

of mature age, and one elderly) are riding alongside one another, passing beneath a marble arch; they are the Magi. Off into the distance, the road behind them leads to two cities; in all likelihood, they represent Bethlehem, the nearer, and Jerusalem, the more distant.

The candid gestures of Joseph, but also that of the shepherd on the left, who glances back over his shoulder at his companion, lends a sense of transiency and vivacity to the scene. It appears to be a moment captured as if with photographic accuracy. But what may appear—on the surface—to represent the immediacy of an instant, in fact, encompasses a much longer and complex timeline. Within this image there is an intricate weave of history, symbols and texts. The artist becomes the author of his own rendition of a unique narrative. The timeline of Ghirlandaio's painting recounts the 'present' moment of the Adoration of the Shepherds as well as the imminent Epiphany. Hidden among the details of the painting, we will also find indications of ancient prophecies that predicted the present moment, as well as symbols that foretell the future.

As mentioned above, we are drawn into the image by the shepherds adoring the infant Christ and Mary in prayer. Directly behind the child there is a makeshift manger: a broken sarcophagus with the words: ENSE CADENS. SOLYMO. POMPEI FULVI[US] AUGUR NUMEN. AITQUAE ME CONTEG[IT] URNA DABIT (*While Fulvi(us), augur of Pompey, was falling by the sword in Jerusalem he said: the urn that covers me shall bring forth a god*). With one hand firmly placed on the sarcophagus that bears the prophetic inscription, Joseph, the earthly surrogate father acts as a liminal figure: a gateway placed on the border between the pre-Christian and Christian eras. Rather than looking toward the

future of the newborn Savior, Joseph shading his eyes, turns and looks back. At first glance, it appears that he is looking off toward the arrival of the adoring masses.[147] A closer inspection of his line of sight reveals that he is instead looking at a heavenly messenger in the sky. The angel is announcing the good news to shepherds on a mountainside pasture. They also shade their eyes from the brightness of the angel (Figure 105). The image of the shepherds on the hillside is a curious and rather anachronistic detail since there are Shepherds are already in the foreground, adoring the child. The Annunciation taking place in the background may be a sort flashback to an earlier event.

If by looking back at the angel Joseph is in fact looking back in time, he is simultaneously looking forward as well, representing both past and present. Like the sarcophagus, I believe Joseph serves as a reminder of past prophecies that are now being fulfilled, as well as future prophecies, yet to manifest. Ghirlandaio seems to be completing a larger narrative circle by perhaps referencing numerous occasions in the Bible in which an angel visits Joseph in his dreams. An angel first came to him before the birth of Christ, in Matthew 1:20:

> An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

[147] Borsook and Offerhaus relate Joseph's eye-sheilding gesture to that of Augustus in the fresco over the entrance to the Sassetti Chapel, where the Emperor sees the monogram of Christ in the sunburst in the presence of the Tiburtine Sybil. The authors suggest that Joseph is looking for the star. Judging by his line of sight I think he is looking toward the angel. There are most certainly links between the prophetic events in both depictions.

Two further encounters with the angel are subsequent to the birth of Christ: in Matthew 2:13 the angel tells Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt (quoted above); in Matthew 2.19-20, when the angel tells Joseph to return to Israel after the death of Herod.

Like Chinese boxes, within these prophetic verses—according to the gospel of Matthew—there are also the confirmations of at least three additional ancient prophecies: Hosea 11:1 ("When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.); the massacre of the innocents in Jeremiah 31:15 ("A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.") and Matthew 2.23 ("…and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene"). The great amount of activity that surrounds Joseph's glance toward the angel infuses him with tremendous importance within the narrative. Other artists typically portray Joseph brooding in a corner. By making him an active figure, as well as a link between the past and the future, Ghirlandaio has restored Joseph's prominence within the narrative (i.e. in the role of the protagonist, as he is in Luke 2).

Just below Joseph's backward gaze, we see the arrival of the visitors from the East. The travelers pass beneath another symbol of the past, a triumphal arch that bears the name of Pompey Magnus, in memory of his siege of Jerusalem (Figure 106). Through the crumbling gateway of past temporal triumphs, this entourage of faithful pilgrims marches toward a future of eternal triumph. Guided by the star, they represent a society that embodies the future, and will soon join the adoring shepherds who are already a part of the community of Christ. Time is also indicated by the lengthy and itinerant journey

of the Magi and their progress toward their destination. According to Matthew 2:1-12, they came from the East, passed through the city of Herod (Jerusalem), and then continued to Bethlehem. The two cities that appear in the background and the road that connects them symbolizes the long, itinerant journey. As Borsook and Offerhaus note, it also reinforces "the idea of successive kingdoms, now giving way to Chrisitanity."[148] The knowledge that the Magi came from somewhere beyond the area we can see in the frame extends the timeline of the narrative further still.

The indications of time abound. These travelers represent the future populations that will convert to Christianity. The already converted shepherds represent the present, as they gaze upon their future (Christ). Mary also looks upon her son and prays. With her air of presentiment, typical of Florentine Madonnas, she has the foreknowledge of what lies ahead. If we were to plot out this story on a timeline, taking into consideration the ancient prophecies, it would extend back in time at least to the era of Pompey in the East and the siege of Jerusalem (63BC). If we accept the possibility that the vision of the angel might hearken back to even more ancient prophecies, then our timeline extends perhaps even to the days of Jeremiah (600BC?). Moving forward in time, there may be symbolic references to the imminent Flight into Egypt, seen in the donkey, the saddle and travel provisions like the canteen. The humble bricks in the foreground are a metaphor for the rebuilding of the faith and the construction of the new Church that will replace the cracked and crumbling pagan structures. There are also allusions to the predestined Crucifixion of Christ. This is represented by Mary's inherent sadness, the *cardellino*

[148] Borsook, *Sassetti and Ghirlandaio*, p.34.

(goldfinch), a dark purple *giaggiolo* (an iris, just barely visible in the lower right corner), the daisies which symbolize Christ's innocence, and the sarcophagus: a reference to the Holy Sepulcher (Figure 107).[149]

Compositionally, Ghirlandaio's masterful narrative may draw from several earlier sources to coalesce into his very original arrangement. He would not have had to go far to view one of the most beautiful and richly ornate paintings of the Infancy of Christ stories: Gentile da Fabriano's *Journey and Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 108). It was located in the Strozzi Chapel (the sacristy) of Santa Trinita, the very church where is own *Adoration* was destined. Stylistically, Gentile's International Gothic style and stacked perspective appear old-fashioned in comparison to Ghirlandaio's panel. Gentile's overly crowded foreground, stylized landscape and rather flat depth of field is a stark contrast to Ghirlandaio's use of perspective, sense of proportion, and attention to the finest details. One element that Ghirlandaio may well have adopted from his predecessor was the actual journey of the Magi. Gentile da Fabriano's continuous narrative shows the itinerant journey of the Magi in the upper background, and the Adoration at the picture plane of the lower foreground. The Magi appear four times within the same pictorial space: seeing the star, entering Jerusalem, passing through Bethlehem, and bearing their gifts.

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[149] Both the goldfinch and the iris are symbols of the Crucifixion. The goldfinch, which builds its nest among the thorns and feeds on thistles, recalls the crown of thorns used to humiliate Christ. The Latin word for the iris, or *giaggiolo*, is gladĭŏlus, or a sword lily, named thus for its sword shaped leaves, which may be reminiscent of the lance that pierced Christ's side. Its dark purple color is also the color of sorrow, penitence and Christ's suffering. There is also a dark green plant between the goldfinch and the bricks. There are no flowers but its heart-shaped leaves look very much like those of the cyclamen, another flower often attributed to Mary. The red spot at the center of the cyclamen flower is symbolic of the bleeding sorrow of Mary's heart. Because Ghirlandaio's plant is not yet flowering, it may symbolize the potential for such sorrow in the future. See Gertrude Grace Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011); George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (Oxford University Press, 1959); Lucia Impelluso *Nature and Its Symbols* (Milan: Eletra, 2003, English translation, J. Getty Trust: 2004).

Ghirlandaio has vastly simplified this journey while also making it more realistic by avoiding the repetition. By placing the cities in the background and linking them by way of a road that snakes through the landscape, the idea of the long journey becomes instantly manifest. Domenico Veneziano (ca. 1440) had also produced an *Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 109), perhaps for the Medici, with a similarly deep landscape, dotted with towns and cities linked by a winding road. Though not technically a combined narrative, the background of Domenico Veneziano's *tondo* includes pastures with shepherds tending the flocks, subtly recalling the previous events of the Nativity narrative that involved the Shepherds.

One of the principal difficulties we encountered previously with the combined *Birth of Christ* compositions in the Byzantine-style, such as Pietro da Rimini's panel, was their lack of order or sequencing of events. In Ghirlandaio's altarpiece, the fact that the Magi have not yet arrived at their destination automatically places the Adoration of the Magi chronologically later than the Adoration of the Shepherds. Whether the two events are separated by several minutes or several days is irrelevant; the compositional arrangement still plots the order of events. The one element that does not quite fit with the proper chronology is the appearance of the angel to the shepherds in the background. I believe, as mentioned above, that the vision of the angel is important as a link between past, present, and future, between prophecy and revelation. The minor scale of the angel and the shepherds is by no means distracting, but it still creates a bit of a temporal wrinkle. The inclusion of the miniature angel was not uncommon among similar

compositions, and may have even been a nod to the *Portinari Triptych,* a masterpiece that Ghirlandaio and his colleagues knew well.

In May 1483, the *Portinari Triptych* (Figure 110) arrived in Florence. It had been commissioned several years earlier to the Flemish painter, Hugo van der Goes, by the Portinari for their family chapel in the Church of Sant'Egidio. The novelty of this large-scale rendition of the Adoration of the Shepherds (in the central panel), created a great deal of interest among Florentine artists, and became an object of study, as well as a great source of inspiration. The Sassetti panel, painted at the time of the arrival of the *Portinari Triptych* in Florence, shares with it several characteristics. For example, one can recognize similarities in the arrangement of Mary and Christ, and in that of the three shepherds.

Ghirlandaio has also borrowed from Van der Goes, a similar collection of symbolic objects laid out in front of the child. These are depicted much in the style of Flemish artists: in a very naturalistic manner, and with great attention to the minute details. Both images showcase the symbolic flower of Florence: the iris. The *Portinari Triptych* displays two white irises (perhaps of the Annunciation) and one purple iris, perhaps an allusion to death and sorrow. Van der Goes also includes one coral colored lily in the vase with three irises. The white lily is a flower often associated with the Virgin as a symbol of her purity, but here the reddish color may symbolize the Passion. There are also violets, a symbol of humility, scattered on the ground. Most are dark purple but three are also white violets (the Trinity?). A sheaf of wheat and the decoration on the ceramic vase, reminiscent of grapes and vines, may symbolize the Eucharistic

symbols of the bread and wine, the body and blood of the "true vine." Red carnations—often a symbol of pure love—adorn the glass vase, but the three carnations may also represent the nails of the Cross. And finally there is a sprig of columbine—a flower whose shape recalls the dove of the Holy Spirit.[150]

Ghirlandaio, nonetheless, makes some distinct alterations in the Sassetti altarpiece. First of all, the scale of his figures and the perspective in his scenes adhere to the more scientific Florentine style. Ghirlandaio portrayed his patrons, Francesco Sassetti and his wife Nera Corsi, not as part of the altarpiece but beyond it. They are depicted in fresco as active spectators on the liturgical wall within the space of the chapel. The Florentine artist has simplified the Nativity in the foreground, creating a more intimate event by eliminating the multitude of angels and the dark architectural structures of the Van der Goes. Ghirlandaio accentuates this sense of intimacy by pulling the protagonists to the front of the picture plane. By eliminating the extra space in the foreground, he creates a privileged position for the spectator to become a fellow witness to the event, along with the shepherds and Francesco Sassetti and his wife.

The child is comfortably resting on a bed of straw, covered by Mary's dark blue velvety robe. There is a stark contrast between the soft pink skin of the healthy baby against the sapphire blue cloth and the emerald green grass, which beckons the viewer's attention. In the Van der Goes' panel, the pale Christ child is laid out on the bare earth

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[150] According to Ferguson's book, columbine depicted with seven blooms on a single stalk may symbolize the seven sorrows of the Virgin, or gifts of the Holy Spirit according to the prophecy of Isaiah (11.1): wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. In Van der Goes, the stalk of columbine actually has eight blooms, seven open and one still a bud. Perhaps this is a symbol of the Creation and the eighth bud a symbol of the future Judgment, Resurrection, or the attainment of Grace. See also Margaret L. Koster, Hugo *Van der Goes and the Procedures of Art and Salvation* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2008), 65-66.

and is almost difficult to distinguish from the background. Ghirlandaio's Mary and Christ exhibit none of the harshness of the Flemish features. They are depicted with the softer, rounder, idealized beauty, typical of Florentine art. Ghirlandaio adds a nimbus to both mother and child. Although the three shepherds are quite rustic in both paintings, Van der Goes has presented us with figures that are more expressionistic, authentic, and perhaps even ungainly. Ghirlandaio's shepherds have a more polished, graceful air about them. Like their Flemish counterparts, the Florentine shepherds are also communicative, but their enthusiasm is a bit more subdued, or at least directed inwardly amongst themselves. They also appear to be a more stable unit; firmly planted on the ground, they seem less likely to tip over.

Another major divergence is Ghirlandaio's use of space. He expanded the middle ground and opened up the background by giving the composition a lower horizon line. He also brings the vantage point of the spectator closer to ground level, as opposed to that of Van der Goes, which appears to be from the perspective of one of the hovering angels. By doing so, Ghirlandaio creates the deep space necessary for the inclusion of the journey of the magi and their retinue, within the same pictorial space.

In truth, the narrative of the *Portinari Triptych* also extends beyond the Adoration of the shepherds, but in the manner of a traditional sequential narrative, that is to say, the scenes are divided among separate panels. When closed, the reverse-side of the wings depict an Annunciation to the Virgin in grisaille. Mary, seated on the left, and the announcing angel, on the right, are depicted within individual niches. When open, the background of the left wing of the triptych portrays Joseph leading Mary down a hill,

journeying toward Bethlehem, with the ass and the ox following (Figure 111). In the background of the central panel, to the left of the adoring shepherds, we can see the two midwives, taking a stroll, while on their right we see an angel announcing the birth of Christ to frightened shepherds in a field (Figure 112). Finally in the right wing, we see a road, upon which several groups of men are travelling (Figure 113). The nearer scouts ask villagers for directions. Behind them, three noblemen arrive on horseback: on the right is a young, dark-skinned and well-dressed man; in the center an wizened, elderly man who carries his right hand near his heart, and on the left, the middle-aged man sports a beard and indicates the sky (perhaps pointing toward the guiding star). Behind them, their retinue approaches to the surprise of the villagers that line the road to witness their arrival. To solidify their identity as visitors from far-off lands, Van der Goes includes a pair of exotic camels.

When considered within the context of the iconographic program of the chapel, the layers of time are not limited to the altarpiece. A complete analysis of the iconographic program is beyond the scope of this chapter, however, we should take note the presence of the donors as well as mention the frescoes positioned immediately above the *Adoration*. As mentioned above, portraits of Francesco Sassetti and his wife Nera Corsi are situated repectively to the right and left of the altar. They are depicted, kneeling and praying in reverence toward the altarpiece, as active spectators in perpetual adoration. Reminiscent of the depiction of Domenico Lenzi and his wife in Masaccio's *Trinity* (1427), these donors sit just outside the sacred space occupied by the biblical figures in the painting but remain witihin the sacred space of their own chapel. Nera,

placed to the left of the painting, mimics the pose of the Virgin; even her dark gown spreads across the floor in a similar manner. Francesco's reverent pose mimics the shepherd in the lower right corner of the altarpiece, in fact, the donor appears to be a fourth shepherd. We can only imagine how these patrons would have felt to to physically be present in their chapel *and* see themselves depicted there, providing a good example for all visitors to the chapel.

Just above the altar on the liturgical wall are two stories of the life of St. Francis of Assisi: *St. Francis Receiving the Rule from Pope Honorius* and *The Resurrection of the Boy.* The first depicts a turning point in the history of the Fransicans; it is the moment that Francis receives the papal bull from Pope Honorius III to establish the order. But rather than portray the scene in Rome in 1223 where it actually took place, Ghirlandaio has transferred the scene to contemporary Florence. In the background we can see Piazza della Signoria and the Loggia dei Lanzi. In the foreground, Florentine citizens watch the momentous event. To the right Lorenzo il Magnifico takes in the scene between Medici supporters: his accountant, Francesco Sassetti and gonfaloniere di giustizia, Antonio Pucci. Lorenzo's sons, the next generation of Medici heirs (Piero *lo Sfortunato*, Giovanni [future Pope Leo X] and Giuliano [future Duke of Nemours]) are seen ascending to the level of the piazza by way of a ramp of stairs. They are accompanied by their humanist tutors, Angolo Poliziano, Luigi Pulci and Matteo Franco.[151] Sassetti's sons are also present, the second youngest, Federigo, stands next to his father, while the

[151] For the identifications, see Warburg, (1932) vol 1, 103-108; 131-135; Borsook & Offerhaus pp, 36-42; Cadogan, 236. See also E. H.Gombrich's analysis that proposes connections between the Medici's political manuevering, tensions with the Vallombrosian order and the investiture of Lorenzo's son Giovanni de'Medici in "The Sassetti Chapel Revisited: Santa Trinita and Lorenzo De' Medici". *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 7 (1997): 11–35.

elder sons, Teodoro (posthumous portrait), Galeazzo, and Cosimo stand on the left, dressed in red Florentine *cioppe*.

The *Resurrection of the Boy* depicts a posthumous miracle of the resurrection of a Roman notary's son performed by St. Francis. The story is recounted by St. Bonaventure in his Life of St. Francis.[152] Warburg suggested that this rarely depicted scene has a personal connection to the Sassetti family, since soon after the death of their eldest son Teodoro in 1479, a new son was born to the family and also given the name Teodoro.[153] As such Ghirlandaio has, again, transferred the event from Rome—where it purportedly took place—to Florence. The miracle is performed right outside the very church where the Sassetti chapel is located. In the background we see the old Romanesque façade of Santa Trinita as well as the omonimous piazza and bridge. The imposing Palazzo Spini stands on the left. From its second story window, we see a boy falling to his death, as did the Notary's son in the narrative ("he threw himself from a window of the palace, and, his bones broken by the final concussion, breathed his last on the spot"). In the

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[152] "A certain notary in the city of Rome had a little son scarce seven years old, who once, when his mother was going unto the church of Saint Mark, was fain, as children be, to go with her; when he was bidden by his mother to tarry at home, he threw himself from a window of the palace, and, his bones broken by the final concussion, breathed his last on the spot. His mother, who had not yet gone far, at the sound of a fall feared it might be that of her child, and returned with all speed; then, when she found her son thus suddenly taken from her by this pitiable accident, she forthwith began to lay vengeful hands upon herself, and with woeful cries roused the whole neighbourhood to mourn with her. Then a certain Brother, named Ralph, of the Order of Minors, who had come thither to preach, drew nigh the child and, full of faith, said unto the father: "Dost thou believe that Francis, the Saint of God, can avail to raise up thy son from the dead, by the love that he ever had for Christ Who was crucified to restore life unto men?" When he made answer that he firmly believed and faithfully confessed it, and would be for evermore a servant of the Saint if by his merits he might be found meet to receive from God so great a benefit,—that Brother prostrated himself in prayer, together with the Brother that was his companion, stirring up the rest that were present unto prayer. This done, the boy began to gape a little and, opening his eyes and stretching his arms, raised himself, and at once, in the presence of all, walked, whole and sound, restored by the wondrous might of the Saint unto life and health at the same time." Saint Bonaventure, *The Life of Saint Francis of Assisi*, Trans. E. Gurney Salter (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1904).

[153] Warburg, (1932, vol 1), 131; Borsook & Offerhaus, 37; Cadogan, 234.

foreground a group of citizens has gathered around a bier ("with woeful cries [the mother] roused the whole neighbourhood to mourn with her"). The women on the left have been identified as the Sassetti daughters and their spouses.[154] Among the men on the right, a posthumous portrait of Neri di Gino Capponi (father of Violante Sassetti's husband) has been identified as the man in purple with his back to the audience.[155] To the far right, a self-portrait of Ghirlandaio looks at the audience, and standing near him is brother-in-law Sebastiano Mainardi.[156] It has been suggested that the resurrected child is a portrait of the youngest Sassetti, Teodoro, given the age provided in the narrative ("had a little son scarce seven years old").[157]

Both frescos are good examples of Ghirlandaio's brand of storytelling. Ghirlandaio exhibits a flare for moderninzing biblical stories, or, in this case, an event from the life of a saint that had occurred more than two hundred years earlier. Ghirlandaio delights in combining different time periods, locations and stories. He includes portraits of the living alongside those of the dead. He translates events in far-off locations to familiar places, with portrait galleries of family members and friends to act as witnesses to the event. We see this compositional scheme in the decorative program of the Sassetti Chapel, but also in the Tornabuoni Chapel, and even in the Sistine Chapel, for example in the *Calling of the Apostles*.[158] The decorative program of the entire chapel

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[154] In his Life of Ghirlandaio, Vasari mentions that the Sasetti daughters are depicted in the fresco, though he says he cannot identify them individually. See also Borsook & Offerhaus, 38-39; Chiarini, 27; Cadogan, 236.
[155] Borsook & Offerhaus, 39-40.
[156] Chiarini, 27.
[157] Borsook & Offerhaus, 37.
[158] *The Calling of the Apostles* is a portrayal of Matthew 4:18-22 or Mark 1:16-20. The depiction of this particular biblical reference is relegated to a secondary position, in the middle plane behind the central

fluctuates between past and present, ancient and modern, near and far. The images contextualize the stories and make connections to modernity, finding precedent and underscoring the cyclicality of time.

Both *St. Francis Receiving the Rule from Pope Honorius* and *The Resurrection of the Boy* made connections between the Sassetti's own lineage and family history, as well as that of their benefactors. We might assume that there is a more personal connection to the Nativity as well, especially given the prominent position of the portraits of Francesco Sassetti and Nera Corsi around the altarpiece. Iconographically, as we have seen, the simultaneous grouping of the *Nativity* and the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (or at least the *Annunciation to the Shepherds*) was much more common since these two events take place sequentially in the gospel of Luke. Why then might the inclusion of the arrival of the Magi have been significant for the Sassetti? How might the combination of the Shepherds and the Magi have fit into the iconographic program of the Sassetti Chapel? The portrait of Lorenzo de'Medici and his intellectual entourage may offer a clue as to why the combination of nativity stories serves as an homage to the family's connection with the Medici.

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group (Cadogan , 225). Nowhere in Gospels of Matthew or Mark is there any reference to the central scene where Peter and Andrew kneel before Christ. Here, Ghirlandaio appears to integrate, in part, the call of the first disciples from the book of Luke 5: 6-11: "they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. (...) When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" Ghirlandaio exercises his poetic license by weaving together these two moments from an equal number of texts. He also weaves together different eras and places, creating a sort of wrinkle in the space/time continuum, as can be seen in both the crowd of people and the landscape. The biblical accounts mention a crowd gathering to hear the word of God at the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Ghirlandaio has intermingled biblical figures with contemporary men and women, not on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, but on those of a calm, narrow lake, surrounded by fertile hills and European Renaissance architecture. Leonardo's Last Supper, as I will argue ahead, is a similarly polynarrative weave, which spans across the different versions of the gospels.

The inclusion of the Magi in *Ghirlandaio's Adoration of the Shepherds* possibly represents a veiled overture on behalf of the Sassetti to strengthen the bonds with their Medici benefactors.[159] In the *Adoration*, the Sassetti would be represented by the shepherds; in fact, near the Christ child and the goldfinch there we can see some little stones or *sassetti*. The Medici, on the other hand, are the magnanimous, noble and enlightened Magi, that guide the populace of Florence toward salvation. This veiled imagery would not have gone unnoticed, and may have been another more subtle way for the Sassetti to showcase their connection and alliance to the Medici. On more than one occasion the Medici have been depicted in close connection with the Magi, or even as the three kings, bestowing gifts. The previously mentioned Domenico Veneziano *Adoration* may have been a Medici commission. Benozzo Gozzoli decorated one of Cosimo de' Medici's private cells at San Marco with an *Adoration of the Magi*. Gozzoli also included Medici portraits as participants and key figures among the dignitaries in his *Procession of the Magi,* in the family's private domestic chapel. Botticelli's 1475 *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi Gallery depicts them as the gift-bearing Magi.

Combined Nativities after the Sassetti *Adoration*

In the end, we must ask whether this polynarrative combination was just a lucky circumstance—a veiled message to honor the Sassetti's benefactors—or was there some compositional and narratological substance to Ghirlandaio's combination of stories? Was

[159] See Richard Zeckhauser, *The Patron's Payoff: Conspicuous Commissions in Italian Renaissance Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

he truly attempting to create a more complete and complex history? Subsequent Nativity and Adoration scenes painted by Ghirlandaio—or his workshop—will continue to employ some of the characteristics found in the Sassetti *Adoration,* but never quite as convincingly. A tondo dated sometime after 1485 (Figure 114), and another panel dated 1492 (Figure 115), both attributed to Ghirlandaio or his workshop, present Mary and the infant in a poses that almost perfectly mirrors those in the Sassetti panel. Even the ox and the ass are nearly identical in positioning, and the manger in the tondo is remarkably similar to the one bearing the prophetic inscription of Fulvius. Joseph, however, has lost the active vigor of the Santa Trinita panel and has returned to his traditional brooding stance. The backgrounds of these paintings contain some interesting details. In the tondo, a close look (Figure 116) reveals, to the left, the Annunciation to the Shepherds and behind them some figures that arrive on horseback. Likewise, in the background of the 1492 panel, far to the upper right of the panel, an angel make the announcement to shepherds on a hillside. In the middle ground on the left side of Joseph's halo, the two shepherds can be seen on the road, making their way to the Holy Family. Set farther into the background but along the road, we can just make out riders on horseback, barely discernable between the stone wall of the manger and the right edge of Joseph's halo. If these riders are the Magi, it would suggest an extension of the timeline and the possible referencing of the Matthew 2 narrative. The distant angel that brings the news to the shepherds appears in all of Ghirlandaio's *Nativities* and *Adorations*, even when its appearance is chronologically prior to the action of the principal scene. Such is the case

with both the 1487 tondo (Uffizi) and the 1488 panel (Ospedale degli Innocenti), which both represent the *Adoration of the Magi*.

The Innocenti *Adoration* (Figure 117) presents yet another combination of narratives, though not as organically as the Sassetti panel. In the foreground there is a large crowd of male dignitaries, young and old. It is somewhat reminiscent of Leonardo's unfinished Uffizi *Adoration*, abandoned a few years earlier. The low wall of the stable spans the middle ground, dividing foreground and background. Looking over that wall are presumably two shepherds who already having paid their respects, look upon the manger. Beyond them, we see a bay of calm waters (another symbol of Mary: the bay of Salvation), and distant cities from whence the Magi have traveled. In the upper right-hand corner, the angel announcing the good news appears, clearly representing a moment that has already passed. The left-hand side of the painting portrays a moment which, in regards to the Adoration of the Magi, has yet to occur: the Massacre of the Innocents. Since the painting was produced for the Ospedale degli Innocenti, the foundling Hospital in Florence, the theme was appropriate for the orphanage that took in the innocent children. The overall experience of the painting is not coherently unified, as in the Santa Trinita *Adoration of the Shepherds*. The probability that all of these actions are happening simultaneously in the Innocenti *Adoration* is forced and unnatural; there is a lack of correlation, of causality between the actions in the foreground and those in the background.

Pinturicchio came fairly close to replicating a more realistic polynarrative feel in his *Adoration of the Shepherds* fresco at the Collegiata in Spello (Figure 118). The

humble and ragged-looking shepherds in the foreground, kneel and pay their respects to the infant Lord. In the middle ground behind them, the Magi and their retinue have just arrived and patiently await their turn to greet the Holy Family, after their long journey through the distant cities. Further up the hill, just coming through the mountain pass, a band of armed soldiers are approaching to carry out Herod's orders to massacre the young. Still further up, the mountain, but outside the proper chronological order, an angel appears to shepherds in a field.

In the Prado and Cortona *Annunciations* Fra Angelico combined moments from two different narratives in order to show a typological connection between the two events, suggesting the link between the Annunciation to the Virgin as redemption of Adam and Eve's Expulsion. In Ghirlandaio's Sassetti *Adoration* there is also a combination of multiple moments from two different, yet related, source texts. The two Nativity narratives describe the event from different points of view: Luke 2, emphasizing the story of the Shepherds, and Matthew 2, the story of the Magi. For the first time, Ghirlandaio combined certain moments from these two texts, not to show a typological connection as Fra Angelico had done, but in an attempt to provide a more comprehensive, or panoptic vision of the event. In a manner not so different from Bernardo Daddi's attempt to show us a simultaneous action (the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Nativity) from two different perspectives across space, Ghirlandaio simultaneously shows us different perspectives of the same narrative, both across space and across an implied timeline. He is imitating the diachronic nature of the development of a written text. The succession of each event can be seen as similar to individual chapters building to express

a more complex narrative flow. The distancing of these groups of protagonists within the pictorial space helps to plot them along a timeline, establishing a more explicit reading order. Symbolic details in the composition act like clues to anticipate events that will take place further along in the text. Telescoping across time, these narrative images provide a retrospective view of the temporal connections between several actions, thereby showing their place within a larger master narrative. These images do not isolate a single pregnant moment of a narrative. To do so would have seemed counterintuitive and disruptive to the flow of time and the vision of history as an uninterrupted and unstoppable chain of events.

Leonardo da Vinci, quoting Heraclitus, expressed a similar notion in one of his notebooks, "*L'acqua che tocchi de' fiumi è l'ultima di quella che andò e la prima di quella che viene. Così il tempo presente.* (In rivers, the water that you touch is the last of what has passed and the first of that which comes; so with present time.). The understanding that time is a constant flow that it cannot be arrested is a fitting metaphor for images that combines narratives and text sources and that constitute a blurring of lines between the past, present, and future. In the next chapter, we will focus on Leonardo and examine in what ways he succeeded in creating a continuous narrative flow in his *Last Supper:* an image that has often been interpreted as depicting a specific *punctum temporis*.

Chapter 4: The Fluidity of Time and Narrative in Leonardo's *Last Supper*

In the *Sassetti Adoration*, Ghirlandaio combined two different stories that both had independent pictorial traditions and combined them to create a polynarrative. He simultaneously depicted temporally and spatially distinct events, and arranged them within a unified setting, to suggesting a timeline of events. In this chapter we will examine how Leonardo utilizes a different sort of polynarrativity in which he combines different textual sources of the same story to dissect the scene into smaller increments, providing a multifaceted view of the event and its development across time.

In the pages that follow, I will explore how the *Last Supper* might express polynarrativity through a close reading of the image, paired with the source texts. But I will also examine them through the lens of Leonardo's experiences at the Sforza court and through clues left by the artist in his notebooks. We shall first examine some of Leonardo's preoccupation with time and narrative as it is revealed through his sketches and paintings. Next, we will look at how the "script" and the "soundtrack" fit together, along with the sequencing and staging of the event. Finally, we will consider the performative aspects of the *Last Supper* in regards to Leonardo's experience with theater at the Sforza court.

Depicting duration

Given his empirical inclinations and scientific curiosity, it is not so far-fetched to imagine Leonardo thinking about how to represent the fourth dimension of time. Leonardo was an attentive, almost obsessive, observer of the world around him. His

notebooks show us his painstaking aims to recreate nature's endless variety, but also to understand the scientific principles—the physics, the biology and the geometry—behind it. He was particularly interested in the dynamics of movement. His studies recording the movements of horses, cats, babies, the flight of birds, or even the dynamics of water, often resemble the work of an animator. They offer insight to his process of studying motion, as well as his attention to the intricacies of anatomical and physiognomic detail. Let us consider, for example, his sheet of cat sketches (Figure 119). We see a veritable play-by-play stop-motion sequence of a cat in action. As our gaze wanders across the page, we recognize and organize the all-too-familiar moves and poses of the common house cat into a sort of motion sequence. Our imagination fills in the gaps to complete a development between her actions as she bathes, curls up, sleeps, plays, hunts, crouches, pounces, and fights. We can also see firsthand how Leonardo's observations often sparked his fantasy: how a certain pose of a common house cat could inspire other forms. The moves of the cat morph into those of a lioness, and ultimately, a dragon. Leonardo's transitions appear effortless and natural; they flow perfectly into one another. The example of the cat drawings exhibits how singular captures of action when placed in proximity, can appear to mimic motion and continuity, much like he will do in the *Last Supper*.

Leonardo was no stranger to capturing a fleeting moment, as can be easily attested in some of his most famous portraits, such as the *Lady with the Ermine* (1489-90) or *La Gioconda* (1504-15) (Figure 120; Figure 121). These portraits appear almost as candid and instantaneous as snapshots, capturing the briefest instant and the most transitory

expression. For centuries, viewers have puzzled over the reason behind Mona Lisa's smile. What sudden distraction caused the Duke's mistress and her regal pet to avert their attention from the direction of the artist/beholder. These details, whether they were truly observed or are inventions of the artist, add a level of fresh spontaneity and sense of physical presence that pique the viewer's interest and, as Alberti said, "make the absent present."[160] As spectators, we want to understand the cause of that reaction; we long to be part of the joke, to participate in that moment, and possess all the information. Perhaps the reason that the allure of these portraits is so enduring is because of their intrigue; they keep us guessing and speculating.

The liveliness and accuracy of the closely-studied expressions of the human experience trigger, within our personal memories, not only similar instances in which we witnessed or performed analogous reactions, but also the emotions we experienced. In short, we can relate to the image on a very human and instinctual level because of the muscle and cognitive memories that it activates. In a similar way, we can appreciate the spontaneity of the depictions of the Christ child's concentration in Leonardo's *Benois Madonna* and the *Madonna of the Carnation*, (Figure 122; Figure 123) or his innocent shenanigans—attempting to climb on top of the lamb—in the Louvre's *Madonna and Saint Anne* (Figure 124). We have all witnessed—and smiled at—comparable instances of an infant's determination to focus on and grasp an object, or in their attempt to ride the family dog. They are moments with which we identify, human experiences that resonate within our collective memory. Such paintings as these are delightful for the spontaneous

[160] Alberti, *On Painting*, II.25

and fleeting capture of emotion that they represent. However, they are not narrative scenes but portraits and devotional images that capture very precise, yet perfectly natural, moments. Since they are not narratives, they do not necessarily provide the viewer with a sense of continuation, duration and development, and yet they exude an enduring quality of somehow existing forever in the present.

The *Last Supper* (Figure 125) is also highly valued and admired for its realistic portrayal of extemporaneous emotions. It is, however, precisely because of this outpouring of spontaneous emotional response that the mural has generally been thought to represent one very precise *punctum temporis* from the Last Supper narrative. In my opinion, Leonardo's *Cenacolo* represents a sequence of several moments from the narrative that have been artfully stitched together. By doing so, Leonardo stresses not the fleeting nature of one fixed moment, but the monumentality of the event, by highlighting the significance of each sentence. Leonardo achieves this end product so seamlessly and efficiently that the effect has been virtually overlooked.

As we have mentioned above, in his notebooks, Leonardo debated the advantage of painting over poetry for its superior level of imitation and its immediacy (*prestezza*).[161] For Leonardo, paintings present entire scenes that can be perceived by its viewer all at once ("*tutto in un tempo*"), as it happens in nature, suggesting a more faithful form of

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161 "*Or vedi che differenza è dall'udir raccontare una cosa che dia piacere all'occhio con lunghezza di tempo, o vederla con quella prestezza che si vedono le cose naturali. Ed ancorché le cose de' poeti sieno con lungo intervallo di tempo lette, spesse sono le volte che le non sono intese […] ma l'opera del pittore immediate è compresa da' suoi riguardatori*. (*Trattato della pittura* I.18). (Now see what a difference there is between hearing a thing related, which over a period of time gives pleasure to the ear, and seeing it instantaneously with that speed with which things in nature are seen. Moreover, the poet's creations are read over long intervals of time, and frequently they are not understood [....] But the work of the painter is immediately understood by those who look at it.)

mimesis.[162] An image has the ability to deliver the complexity and richness of detail all at once; the written word can achieve this only over a long series of verses, and the time it takes to read them. As he elaborates his thoughts, Leonardo compares a painting to a choir whose members sing together in a breathtaking, "harmonious ensemble" *(armonico concento).* Conversely, because of poetry's diachronic and linear nature, it can only ever present a concatenation of solo performances (*ciascuna voce per sé sola in vari tempi*), never attaining a harmonious unity of experiencing it as a whole, simultaneously.[163]

The significance of Leonardo's idea of visualizing the image "*in un subito*" (in an instant) should not be confused with the idea of a single *punctum temporis*. Although Leonardo inserts these observations into a discussion on the differences of painting and poetry, he never infers that painting can or even should portray only one precise instant of a narrative, nor does he specifically claim the opposite. Instead, he focuses on harmonious accord of the painting in all of its parts, which is received simultaneously, as an instant gratification, by the eye of the viewer.[164] It may be coincidence, but among the pages of the notebook known as the Codice Trivulziano, which was compiled during his early years in Milan (1487-1490), Leonardo took note of a famous observation of the Pre-Socratic philosopher, Heraclitus. "In rivers, the water that you touch is the last of what has passed and the first of that which comes. So with time present."[165] Immediately above this annotation, there is another that reads, "*punto non è parte di linia"* (a point is

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[162] Leonardo, *Trattato*, I.28.
[163] Leonardo, *Trattato*, I.17.
[164] "*La pittura ti rappresenta in un subito la sua essenza nella virtú visiva, e per il proprio mezzo, d'onde la impressiva riceve gli obietti naturali, ed ancora nel medesimo tempo, nel quale si compone l'armonica proporzionalità delle parti che compongono il tutto, che contenta il senso.*" (*Trattato*, I.19).
[165] "*L'acqua che tocchi de' fiumi è l'ultima di quella che andò e la prima di quella che viene. Cosí il tempo presente*". Codex Trivulziano, Fol 34v, Milan

not a part of a line). Was he perhaps contemplating temporal flow, and the impossibility of a point (a fixed moment) to have continuity? The idea that when one looks at a river they can simultaneously see the past, present and future issimply metaphor for the flow of time in the natural world. In order to isolate the point, it must necessarily be removed from the line or flow of time (*i.e*. taken from its context). In the natural world, time flows continuously. Therefore, if Leonardo believes that painting is a superior form of imitation to poetry, as a staunch observer of the empirical world, wouldn't logic dictate that he attempt to depict duration as well? To be sure, it would be impossible to know what Leonardo was thinking when he wrote down these observations among his list of glossary terms, but they may be insightful when considering them in the context of the temporal flow of the *Last Supper* as a sequential chain of reactions.

The temporal structure of the *Last Supper*

A great number of scholars who have written on the *The Last Supper* have concerned themselves with pinpointing *the* precise instant represented, but there is still much debate regarding the issue. As Leo Steinberg has show in his book, *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper* (2001), scholars are generally undecided among three possible moments from the gospels:

a) Christ's statement that he would be betrayed by one of the men present, the "*unus vestrum*" moment;

b) The "Is it I, Lord?" moment, which highlights the self-doubt of the Apostles; or

c) The identification moment: when the traitor is singled out as he whose hand will dip his bread in the same plate as Christ.[166]

One might argue that all three of these narrative moments occur in such rapid succession to one another that it would hardly make much difference, and yet they all represent essential points in a very complex narrative.

Soon after the completion of the mural, attempts were already being made to identify the action. An early engraving of *Last Supper*, circulating around 1500 and attributed to Giovanni Pietro da Birago (Figure 126), includes the addition of a *cartellino* with the inscription of the verse Matthew 26:21—AMEN DICO VOBIS QUIA UNUS VESTRUM ME TRADITURUS EST.[167] A few years prior, a friend and colleague of Leonardo, the mathematician Luca Pacioli, published a similar interpretation in his *De divina proportione* (1498). He describes Leonardo's convincingly life-like depiction of the Apostles as capturing the shock of hearing the ineffable truth: "*unus vestrum me traditurus est*."[168] Evidence such as this has traditionally predisposed the identification of Leonardo's composition with this particular moment from the gospel of Matthew 26:21.

In his *De sacra pictura* (1624), Cardinal Federigo Borromeo—who held the artistic value of Leonardo's mural in great esteem—suggested that Leonardo had, "depicted the Savoir as if he were speaking or had just finished a prayer."[169] Depending

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166 Leo Steinberg, *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper* **(**Cambridge, Mass. Distributed by MIT Press, 2001), 19-29.
167 Steinberg, 19.
168 "*Non è possibile con maggiore attenzione vivi li apostoli immaginare al suono della voce de l'ineffabile verità quando disse: 'unus vestrum me traditurus est,' dove con acti e gesti l'uno e l'altro e l'altro a l'uno con viva e afflicta ammirazione par che parlino si degnamente con sua ligiadra mano il nostro Lionardo lo disposte.*" (Luca Pacioli, *De Divina Proportione*, Chapter 3, p 41).
169 Federigo Borromeo, *De sacra pittura*, 1624, Book 2:4

on the gospel account, Borromeo's observation could effectively be taken to mean the moment following Christ's announcement of "*unus vestrum*," and therefore, that brief moment of self-doubt among the disciples (*Is it I, Lord*?). But it could also be in reference to the moment following the naming the traitor by his actions, as Borromeo suggested in his *Musaeum* (1625):

> Leonardo did not just put grief and tears on display—something almost any other artist could have done—but rather conveyed the emotions of the Apostles by showing their gestures. The artist did this so well that people looking at the painting will find that they can practically hear the words the Apostles exchanged with one another after the Savior made that fearful statement: "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me, will betray me." [Matthew 26:23] The venerable face of the Savior reveals his profound sadness, but it can only be inferred, for it is hidden and suppressed by his powerful self-control. [170]

For Borromeo, Leonardo's great innovation was the variety of genuine emotions conveyed through gestures of the dining companions. Troubled by the mural's deterioration, Borromeo commissioned Andrea Bianchi, known as il Vespino, to make a copy of the gesturing Apostles before the figures became illegible.

In describing the mural, the Cardinal characterizes the event, not as a fixed instant, but as if it were unfolding before the spectator: "...people looking at the painting will find that they can practically hear the words of the Apostles exchanged with one another...." When examined individually, we can see that the Apostles are all quite different, and rightly so, as one would expect each man to react in their own personal manner. But the variations of expression extend beyond the response to a single utterance. The gestures and expressions of the Apostles are not in synch with each other, in other words, they do not appear to be in reaction to the same remark. According to

[170] Federigo Borromeo, *Musaeum*, 1624, p. 51.

Borromeo's characterization of them, they are different enough to imply that they are in response to different events, or moments:

> The horror of the matter at hand, are almost audible. One of the Apostles levels a threat against the traitor; another promises the Lord help and assistance. One is paralyzed, struck silent but the enormity of the crime; another is choked up in distress and offers himself to Christ as a fellow sufferer. There is one who tries to turn suspicion of this great crime away from himself; there is another who wants to find out by interrogating the others, exactly how the intended crime is to unfold. Some are thunder-struck, some are furious, and some listen in silence to what the others say.[171]

In the late nineteenth century, Josef Strzygowski—in opposition to the widely accepted interpretation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe that the mural represents the "*unus vestrum*" moment—revived Cardinal Borromeo's idea that there is a certain level of ambiguity, and perhaps even multiplicity, in the event depicted.[172] Strzygowski interpreted the expressions not to be in reaction to the catalyst statement, but, as Federigo Borromeo had suggested, in response to Christ's second decree: the explanation of how the traitor would reveal himself as, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me" (Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:20). He speculated that the position of Christ's hands on the table—near the bread and wine—coupled with the disciples' violent reactions to remove their hands from the table, might even suggest the passage Luke 22:21: "But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table."[173] Nineteenth-century scholars

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[171] Borromeo, *Musaeum*, 52.

[172] Strzygowski, Josef, 'Leonardos Abendmahl und Goethes Deutung' in Goethe -Jahrbuch, 17, 1896.; J.W. von Goethe, *Observations on Leonardo da Vinci's celebrated Picture of the Last Supper*. Trans. and intro, G.H. Noehden. (London: W. Blumer and W. Nicol, 1821). "The means of excitement, which he employed to agitate the holy and tranquil company, at table, are the words of the Master, *There is one among you that betrays me*. The words are uttered, and the whole company is thrown into consternation: but *he* inclines his head, with bent-down look, while the whole attitude, the motion of the arms, the hands, and every thing seems to repeat the inauspicious expressions which silence itself confirms: *Verily, verily, there is one among you that betrays me.*" (9).

[173] Steinberg, pg. 21.

of the post-Lessing period clearly disagreed with the ambivalence contained within the theories of Strzygowski and Cardinal Borromeo. Their skepticism of such an interpretation is based on the likelihood that it caused confusion and ambiguity and would, therefore, jeopardize the temporal unity of 'the moment.'[174]

By representing the consequence of the Apostles reaction to the identification of the traitor, the announcement that stimulated such a response is naturally implied, effectively lengthening the time-frame of the moment depicted. But even this moment is the consequence of an even earlier action and reaction: that is to say, the pronouncement of the "*unus vestrum*" followed by the moment of self-doubt. This chain of actions and reactions has been likened that of a theological debate or *disputatio:* comprised of opposition and response to the *quaestio,* or topic at hand.[175] The final *determinatio*, it could be said, is the Institution of the Eucharist. The consecration of the bread and wine is not specifically depicted in Leonardo's mural. It is, however, implied—through symbols and gestures—as the solution. The idea that the *Last Supper* might portray such a lengthy conversation in a single visual capture was not very convenient for scholars convinced that paintings could present only one *punctum temporis*. Identifying the Santa Maria delle Grazie *Last Supper* as depicting the "unus vestrum" moment has traditionally been, for the majority, a much more expedient and tidy explanation.

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[174] Steinberg, 23

[175] "... the simultaneity of stimulus and response was a familiar convention, indicating that the two parties, rather than speaking at once, were reciprocally engaged. But this novel reading of the occasion threatened to lengthen the interpretability chain so as to run from first signal, through reactive questioning, to counter-response. It implied a protagonist who could be conceived at either one of two moments—or who was able to act in both moments at once." Steinberg, 23

In his thorough study of the *Last Supper*, Steinberg found evidence to suggest that there were attempts to "correct" the ambiguity of Leonardo's composition, and that they began early on. Many of the numerous copies and engravings of *Last Supper* in circulation, as early as 1500, exhibit slight changes that help to simplify and clarify the portrayed action. As mentioned above, Giovanni Pietro da Birago's version (ca. 1500) contained the *cartellino* with the identifying inscription, Matthew 26:21. Marcantonio Raimondi's version on Raffaello's design ca. 1515, (Figure 127) homogenizes the gestures of the table companions. More importantly, it radically changes the attitude of Christ, by means of a more upright posture, and an expression that transforms the quiet acceptance of the original to a stern pause before he identifies the traitor.[176] Raimondi's version also reduces the amount of dishware on the table, placing a single communal plate in a more conspicuous position between Christ and Judas. The copies after Rubens' sketch (Figure 128) underscore the Sacrament by removing everything but the bread and wine from the table, and by placing them directly in front of Jesus.[177] These are just a few examples to illustrate that the problem of temporal ambiguity in the *Last Supper* enjoys a much lengthier timeline than one might imagine.

Consequently, Steinberg came to the conclusion that the theory a single fixed instant does not hold water with Leonardo's *Cenacolo*, due to the unsynchronized nature of the reactions of the disciples. While the unity of place in Leonardo's mural is undeniable, the unities of action and time cannot be tied to one precise *punctum temporis*.

[176] Steinberg, 23
[177] Steinberg, 40

Steinberg, in fact, ponders whether Leonardo's "perfect intelligence" may have attempted "the phenomenon of duration":

> ... the scene is describable as a sequence of a half dozen moments. Each phase of the recorded event is in evidence. The action proceeds from the center, where Christ promulgates the announcement—"one of you shall betray me." General consternation ensues, everyone asking, "Lord, is it I?" Whereupon Peter leans over, prodding John to get more precise information. Not shown, but implied by what follows, is the next moment—John's question to Christ; to which Christ responds, "He whose hand is with me on the table." Whereat Judas recoils.[178]

Steinberg's characterization of Leonardo's composition being a united confluence of several fixed points from the Last Supper narrative is groundbreaking. His analogy that Leonardo applied his theory of *sfumato* to blend together the gradations of time, and therefore introduce duration into a visually unified composition, is brilliant.[179] His well-researched observations put the internal timeline of the *Last Supper* into question, providing a springboard for new investigations and hypotheses regarding temporal order in Renaissance narrative art.

If, as Steinberg has posited, the *Last Supper* does not simply represent one particular moment but several, then it may be more comparable to a montage of sequential snapshots, taken over a brief span of time.[180] I would develop Steinberg's interpretation a step further and demonstrate how we might read Leonardo's masterpiece as the portrayal of the event in its entirety. There are two principal senses at play: sound and vision. Leonardo has provided his viewer with both a virtual soundtrack—the gospel

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[178]Steinberg, 25

[179] "Leonardo's conception of narrative in the Last Supper applies the *sfumato* principle even to the gradations of time" Steinberg, 26

[180] "Leonardo's reasoning prompts us to infer that he would find the superiority of painting not in its confinement to a fixed instant, but in its power to present successive moments without the foregoing dying away, " Steinberg, 28

texts voiced by the "almost audible" gestures of the Apostles—and a succession of perfectly fused still frames that visually represent those gospel verses. When processed together through our act of seeing, the mural becomes a performative experience. In essence, it can be read as a piece of drama or pictorial *sacra rappresentazione*: one that would engage the active participation of the spectators in the daily celebration of the mystery of the Eucharist.

Steinberg, in the quote above, proposed a sequence of a half dozen moments where the action is read as proceeding from the center. It is a hypothesis that makes perfectly logical sense on the page, but becomes somewhat jumbled and chaotic when we try to follow it across the image. Steinberg places the beginning of the action with Christ's "*unus vestrum*" statement at the center of the painting. This statement, he says, is followed by general consternation of the Apostles' self-doubt, but in which direction are we to look: simultaneously left and right? The next event, clearly visible to the left of Christ, is Peter's request for John's intervention. This, in turn, is followed by the identification of the traitor, and the "recoil" of Judas' hand, which would appear to remain within the same group of three. The 'script'—for lack of a better word—proposed by Steinberg reflects by and large the Last Supper account in the gospel of John 13:21-25, with the mention Matthew 26:22/Mark 14:19 (the self-doubt) and a line from Luke 22:21 (regarding the hand on the table).[181] The narrative flow, or movement around the painting, implied by Steinberg seems, however too disorganized and erratic for such a

[181] In regards to the recoil of Judas' hand, as one of the "half dozen moments" depicted, I would point out that such a detail is not referenced in any of the gospel accounts. This may be Steinberg's reading of the image, but is not entirely clear in the painting whether Judas' hand is reaching or retracting.

highly structured composition. It is reminiscent of the reading order of earlier continuous narratives, such as Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* panels, where viewers were compelled to perform a virtual egg hunt to trace the narrative. Furthermore, this 'script' really only describes one-third to possibly one-half of the image, in a somewhat lop-sided fashion.

Certainly a chaotic movement around the composition would mimic the emotional turmoil of the Last Supper narrative, but Leonardo's highly symmetrical and organized composition imposes a level of order among such chaos. In fact, the composition is beautifully divided by the four sets of triads, formed by the apostles, two groups on either side of Christ. These groupings naturally section the wall into what I will refer to as frames, since I view them almost as photographic stills. I would also argue that the chronological order of the frames be read in the traditional manner from left to right, as text across a page, like the Word it symbolizes. It seems to my reasoning that the narratological development runs its course along this linear, almost textual, left to right axis. But by no means am I suggesting that the movement in the mural is purely linear; in fact, I believe it is both linear and circular; it expands and contracts. Martin Kemp equated the movement of *Last Supper* to a series of waves that move outward from the center: "the actions and attributes of the participants effect a series of resonances in time, like the diffusion of ripples in water."[182] I agree with Kemp's analogy. In fact, both Kemp and Steinberg are correct in saying that the initial catalyst for the action begins from the center with Christ's "unus vestrum" avowal, which causes a wave-like effect to wash over the apostles (Figure 129). This ripple effect, however, should not be imagined

[182] Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvelous Works of Nature and Man*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. pg. 179.

as a frozen, photographic still frame. Instead, we must also imagine its duration and the development of what happened between that announcement and the sacrament of the Eucharist. As a model of movement, consider Leonardo's studies on the turbulence of water (Figure 131) where he records a similar motion; the water pours in through a spout at the center, ripples outward toward the edges and swirls back around.

I believe that Leonardo Last Supper represents a sort of time-lapse sequence in a static image, capturing different temporal moments of the event, within different 'frames.' Each frame, like a section of filmstrip, represents a different moment of the narrative and, with it, a different segment of the "soundtrack", in this case a verse from the gospel. Ripples, like sound waves, naturally form concentric circles that travel outward from their center point at 360 degrees (Figure 130). We can imagine that each ripple represents a verse from the gospel narrative(s). The pronoucement of the "*unus vestrum,*" which emanates from Christ's position at the center causes the ripple effect, acting as the catalyst of the action. The verses, paired with the gestures of the Apostles in the individual frames, create the basis for this static image that becomes a sort of dynamic performance. The 'actors' are arranged conveniently into four groupings of three, and one at the center. These divisions form the individual frames. Accordingly, we could imagine that each of Leonardo's vertical frames has a particular verse or verses assigned to it. The individual lines would be 'heard' or read through the gestures of the apostles, much like Dante's experience with the relief panels in Purgatory. As the viewer's eye pans across from left to right, reading the scene in a linear fashion, it will arrive at each individual scene along with a diferent sound bite or verse (Figure 132).

The final effect might be likened to that of a motion picture; the frames, each paired with their corresponding verse or 'soundtrack,' are spliced together seamlessly, connected by the hands and arms of the disciples. The temporal unity appears to reside in the seamless flow between the frames that represent the timeless sequence of the event and the human emotions involved. The Last Supper is *the* pivotal scene in Christianity: the fulfillment of the prophecy. It marks both the beginning of the end of Christ's earthly life, as well as the beginning of the promise of eternal life for the faithful. Within this time capsule, the action and the words of the gospel are in continuous loop playback, and they mimic the eternal repetition of both the spiritual and physical consumption of the daily bread.

The evolution of Leonardo's *Cenacolo*

By examining Leonardo's preliminary sketches for the *Last Supper* (Figure 136 ; Figure 142), we can see that his composition underwent some major changes before the actual execution of the mural. His earliest ideas were much more akin to the traditional compositions of the monumental Florentine *Cenacoli,* with which he was no doubt familiar. The large Last Supper frescos of Taddeo Gaddi at Santa Croce, ca. 1360 (Figure 133), Andrea del Castagno at Sant'Apollonia, 1447 (Figure 134), and Domenico del Ghirlandaio at the Ognissanti Church, 1480 (Figure 135), positioned the Apostles at equal intervals along the horizontal axis of the table. Leonardo's early sketches exhibit a similar distribution of the disciples, while the final composition displays them in tight

groupings of three. The gestures of the Apostles seen in Leonardo's preparatory sketches are not yet so emphatic, but evoke the stoic calm and order of the Florentine *Cenacoli*. Other features that are in keeping with iconographic tradition are: the position of Judas, seated on the opposite side of the table; John collapsed forward onto table in front of Jesus; and a more unequivocal arrangement of the plate and the hands of Christ and Judas near it.

These characteristics are particularly visible in the Venice drawing (Figure 136), which is clearer and more comprehensive.[183] The scene in the Venice drawing is witnessed from above, giving the viewer a bird's-eye view of the table and the apostles. It was a vantage point that harkened back to a compositional style of the early Trecento, seen in the panels of Duccio or Lippo Memmi, respectively in Siena and San Gimignano (Figure 137 &

Figure 139). The Apostles in Leonardo's drawing are arranged, however, along the far side of a long rectangular table: a trait seen in the *Last Suppers* of Taddeo Gaddi, and in what one would have seen in Orcagna's fresco at Santo Spirito (Figure 138). The large-scale Florentine murals of the fifteenth century depicted the scene as a fictive upper room within the refectories. As such, they were often positioned on the wall at a height above

[183] There is some debate concerning the authenticity of the sketch. Although the handwritten names were certainly written by Leonardo, the draughtsmanship has been questioned. It may have been drawn by of Leonardo's pupils.

eye-level. As such, the viewer's vantage point was from just below the table. Very few details of Leonardo's early study were translated to the final mural in Santa Maria delle Grazie. One element that is similar between the sketch and the mural is second disciple from the right. In the drawing, he is listed as Simon (Figure 140), but he corresponds to the Apostle traditionally identified as Thaddeus or Jude in the mural.

The rapid and loose Windsor sketch RL12542 (Figure **142**) demonstrates Leonardo working out his ideas. While it may be more difficult to read, it does offer a greater sense of the dynamic motion and the tighter arrangements that one sees in the mural. His figures truly come to life; the quick motion of the pen and the non-fixed quality of the limbs lends a sense of animation, as the artist experiments with various poses. In many ways, this study is representative of a list of ideas for a *Last Supper* among his notes that propose some possible actions for his protagonists (ff. 62v and 63r, Forster Codex Victoria and Albert, London) (Figure 143). In these notes, we catch a glimpse of Leonardo casting the roles of his actors and giving them their stage directions.[184] Although the majority of the descriptions in the Forster notes do not appear in either the Venice study or the final mural, some may be recognizable in the Windsor study (the letters in the table below indicate the different apostles in Figure 144 and Figure 145):

"One who was drinking has left the glass where it was and turned his head towards the speaker.	*The figure labeled C appears to hold a cup aloft in his left hand and turns his head to the right* (Figure 146)

[184] Steinberg has doubts that Leonardo wrote these notes for himself, since he feels that the artist would have been able to convey more through a quick sketch of the figure he had in mind, rather than a description. He believes that they may have been written for a pupil (p. 285).

Another twists the fingers of his hands together and turns with set brows to his companion	*Represented in the grouping D, E the figure on the right has clasped hands and looks back at his companion over his shoulder-* (Figure 147)
Another, with his hands spread open, displays their palms and shrugs his shoulders up towards his ears and gapes in astonishment.	*Similar to the figure identified as Andrew in the mural, third from the left* (Figure 158)*, but also Windsor sketch figure H* (Figure 151)
Another is speaking in his neighbor's ear, and he who listens turns towards him and gives him hearing, holding in one hand a knife, and in the other the bread half cut through by the knife.	*Possibly suggested, in part, by the isolated figure located on the Windsor sheet below the table* (Figure 149). *He holds what appears to be a round loaf in the left hand; the object in the right hand is difficult to determine.*
Another, as he turns round holding a knife in his hand, upsets with that hand a glass which is upon the table.	*Figure A – he appears to have an overturned cup between his right hand and elbow. There is a long, thin, dark knife-like object in the right hand.* (Figure 148)
Another rests his hands upon the table and watches.	*Similar to the figure in the mural on the far left, identified as Bartholomew, no apparent correlation in the sketch.*
Another blows (spews) out his mouthful	*There are no apparent correlations in either the mural or the sketches.*
Another bends forward to see the speaker and makes a shade for his eyes with his hand.	*Similar to the action of Peter [L] in the second group from the same sketch* (Figure 150).
Another leans back behind the one who is bending forward, and sees the speaker between the wall and the one who bends forward."	*Figure G- bends backward to look past H in order to confer with I, who is just barely suggested with a few lines* (Figure 151).

Within these notes, we can see Leonardo carefully considering the range of emotional reactions that the individual Apostles could potentially elicit, and how best to convey such responses through a variety of postures and gestures. From among these descriptions it is possible to recognize the initial consternation of the disciples immediately following Christ's revelation of betrayal ("*unus vestrum...*"). The sudden interruption and initial shock value cause a chain of unexpected reactions: one spills his

drink, another spits out his food, another abruptly stops drinking his wine. This is followed by the subsequent reaction; they hurriedly whisper to one another, perhaps asking for confirmation that they heard correctly, or speculating about whom Christ speaks. Shrugging shoulders, gaping mouths and astonished eyes communicate utter disbelief: "His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant" (John 13:22).

The position and action of Judas seem also to be key in the Windsor study. He is the only figure to appear twice. On the left-hand side of the sheet, there is a figure seated at the opposite side of the table from his fellow disciples (reduced to only ten, perhaps eleven). This is presumably Judas, given that such an arrangement was iconographically customary. In addition, the figure leans forward with his arm outstretched across the table, we might assume, to dip the bread in the communal plate. Since Leonardo placed this character on the opposite side of the long rectangular table, tradition already identifies him as the traitor. The fact that he is actively reaching to dip the bread is rather superfluous to his identification, but it adds a dynamic level that had not yet been seen in other painted renditions of the narrative.[185] In the Windsor study, Leonardo's Judas nearly leaves his seated position to reach the plate; his action is deliberate. Florentine *Cenacoli* like those of Taddeo Gaddi (Santa Croce), Andrea del Castagno (Sant'Apollonia) and Ghirlandaio (San Marco, 1482) (Figure 152-Figure 154) depict Judas firmly seated with an erect posture, holding a piece of bread in his hand. The arm

[185] Interestingly, a nearly identical pose to that of the Windsor study Judas would be seen in Franciabigio's *Cenacolo* at the Calza Convent (c. 1514), with the added dynamic of the stool being tipped over by his haste in standing.

of Gaddi's Judas is placed forward over the bowl to dip the bread; he appears to perform the act almost unwittingly, without any show of effort. In Ghirlandaio's Ognissanti (1480) and Badia di Passignano (1476) *Cenacoli* (Figure 135; Figure 155), Judas does not hold any bread, but remains seated. This is also the case in Cosimo Rosselli's *Last Supper* (Figure 157) in the Sistine chapel (1499), and Perugino's *Cenacolo di Fuligno* ca. 1494 (Figure 157)—where Judas stares boldly at the spectator.

In Leonardo's Windsor study, Judas appears again among the group of four, sketched on the right-hand side of the sheet. This detail—drawn at a slightly larger scale—portrays the key moment when Christ identifies Judas as the traitor (Figure 146). Jesus is flanked by John—who rests face-down on the table in front of him—and presumably Peter, as was traditional in *Last Supper* scenes.[186] Judas, looking horribly curved, sits opposite Christ. The men face one another; Christ tilts his head to the left in a somewhat compassionate manner, while Judas' hunched shoulders, lowered head and upward glance exude his shame. Instead of the horizontal position of the table in the upper portion of the sheet, in the detail of Christ and Judas, Leonardo has shifted the axis

[186] The majority of the earlier, stoically calm renditions of the *Last Supper* (i.e. those of Giotto, Duccio, Taddeo and Agnolo Gaddi, Ghiberti, Andrea del Castagno, Fra Angelico, Lorenzo Monaco, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, and Signorelli) portray John sleeping either in the table in front of Christ or resting on his chest. Likewise, Peter is seated on the opposite side of Christ, except in the images by Giotto and Taddeo Gaddi; they arrange them apostles on one side of Christ, with John in the middle. Giotto seats them to the left of Christ, while Gaddi places them to his right. The fact that John is resting with his head inclined may refer to the passage in the book of John 13:25, when intervening for Peter, John leaned "... forward on Jesus' chest, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" John's head resting on Christ's chest may also reference the fact that he was 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. None of the gospel passages describe him as sleeping. One explanation may be that since John is often identified as the author of the Book of Revelations, which prophesizes the Apocalypse he was shown to be asleep—or in a dream state—in reference to his prophetic visions. This can be seen in Giotto's fresco *St. John on Patmos*, in the Peruzzi Chapel of Santa Croce in Florence or in Donatello's stucco medallion of St. John in the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo in Florence. In Purgatory, Dante indicates St. John in the procession as, "an old man [who] came alone and walked as though he slept, despite his keen expression (Purg. XXIX.143-44). A large scale Last Supper that does not depict John sleeping, is that of Cosimo Roselli in the Sistine Chapel, which was painted contemporarily with that of Leonardo.

of the table diagonally to the left. Seeing the table at an oblique angle allows for a better view the plate on the table and the actions of the two men.

There is a remarkable amount of detail for so hasty a sketch, but the most intriguing are the positions of the arms and hands. Like an animator's flip book, we can see Leonardo experimenting with various positions and attitudes. Jesus holds his arm out extended toward the dish, as if dipping the bread, but then we see it angled upward, as if offering the sop to Judas. Likewise, Judas' right arm is also drawn in two different positions: stretched outward to dip his bread into the plate, and angled upward to receive the dipped sop from Jesus. The positions of the hands may appear to be minor details, but quite the opposite, the varied iconographies inform us that Leonardo was drawing from multiple Gospel accounts. In John 13:26, Jesus gives the dipped sop to Judas. However, in the nearly identical verses of Matthew 26:23 and Mark 14:20, Judas actively dips his sop in the bowl with Christ.[187] The position of his left arm is also going through trials. It appears that Leonardo considered placing Judas' left palm on the left knee as he stands up from the stool and leans toward the table. Ultimately, he opts to position Judas' left hand furtively behind his back, presumably to hide the sack of coins that identify him that identify him as the traitor.

Although some of the traditional *Last Supper* characteristics of his Tuscan colleagues still lingered, the Windsor study and the Forster annotations are evidence that Leonardo certainly had in mind a much more lively, communicative, and performative

[187] John 13:26 -"Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot." Matthew 26:23 - "Jesus replied, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.'" Mark 14:20 - "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me."

display from his group of thirteen.[188] The sketch also demonstrates that Leonardo was still in the process of working out the details of his composition. Like the final mural, the notes do not appear to give preference for any one specific moment. The timeline of the action seems to consider the several moments that compose the core of the biblical narrative.

Adapting a screenplay from the canonic gospels

The primary source texts of the Last Supper are, of course, the four canonical gospels. Across the four accounts, there is no crystal clear image of the exact play of the events (see Table 1). In the length of just a few verses, we move from the communal meal to the announcement of the betrayal, the initial shock and self-questioning of the Apostles, to the identification of the Judas as the traitor, to the institution of the Eucharist. Matthew 26:20-29 and Mark 14:18-24 are most similar in their sequence of events. John 13:21-26, offers more insight regarding the emotional states of mind of the twelve yet does not include the institution of the Eucharist. Luke 22:14-24 diverges from the other accounts to the greatest degree, placing the institution of the Eucharist before the other events. Just as the four gospel accounts vary in their order, I believe Leonardo's

[188] Steinberg has doubts that Leonardo wrote these note for himself, since he feels that the artist would have been able to convey more through a quick sketch of the figure he had in mind, rather than a description. He believes that Leonardo may have written them as an exercise for a pupil (285). It seems odd to me however that we should find so many similarities between the notes and Windsor study. It is true that Leonardo rapid sketches can sometimes speak volumes, but we tend to assume that artist came up with all these inventions on his own. I supposed it is possible that the Forster notes are exactly what they appear to be, *notes* taken during a conversation--and later sketched--with others, hypothesizing about the emotions and the reactions when one hears shocking news. Again, we cannot know for sure, but we do see is a clearer path toward a break from traditional *Last Supper* scenes.

composition allows the viewer the freedom to read the image in many ways. Like a sermon, we can choose any single gospel verse, and expand the narrative, backward or forward, in a linear (chronological) fashion, or in a circular fashion. I do feel, however, that the emphatic gestures of the Apostles enact specific verses of the gospels, giving substance and emphasis to the Word. [189]

By giving prominience to each verse, to each incremental moment of such a pivotal event, it is possible that Leonardo attempted to slow the down rapid succession of dramatic actions. He has, in effect dissected this moment of time in a very metaphysical manner in order to isolate each of its parts. As I have demonstrated above, I do not think it is unreasonable to read the image in a frame by frame, verse by verse manner. And while this can be achieved in a chronological or linear manner by reading left to right, our reading of the image, like the natural flow between each of the frames, can also be done in an arbitrary manner, in the same way that a preacher might construct a sermon. Such a process would underscore the significance of each singular verse/moment that makes up the event, allowing his viewer to contemplate the range of individual emotional reactions, as well as the implications of each action.

In the previous chapter, we examined how Ghirlandaio constructed a unique narrative in his *Adoration of the Shepherds* by cherry-picking actions from two different source texts concerning different versions of the events following the birth of Christ (Luke 2 and Matthew 2). He then seamlessly combined these actions within a unified

[189] "Unlike the *homilia*, the *sermo* concentrates on a particular theme developed from a few key words in the biblical reading." From "The Structure of Sermons" A History of Medieval Christian Preaching as Seen in the Manuscripts of Houghton Library, Harvard College Libraries website (Last Reviewed: August 27, 2012): http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/collections/early_manuscripts/preaching/structure.cfm

setting in a way that suggests the chronological order of the actions. The expressions of Leonardo's Apostles are individual and unique, as are the words utilized by each of the four evangelists to describe the episode. The communicative nature of the gestures remind us of Dante's experience with the relief panels, the figures of which evoked "*visibile parlare*" (visible speech), prompting the poet to recall specific biblical verses, allowing him to pinpoint certain temporal moments of the narrative. The gestures of Leonardo's Apostles also appear to be indicative of specific verses, however there is no single gospel account which can adequately satisfy all their various gesticulations. I would propose that Leonardo created a narrative weave of the most evocative moments from the four gospel texts in order to obtain the most comprehensive and expressive sequence of verses (see Table 2 for reference) as the 'script' for his *sacra rappresentazione* (mystery play).

The left-hand side of the composition, including the first two triads of Apostles, is best represented by the passage in Book 13 of the Gospel of John, namely verses 21-24:

> [21]After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." [22] His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. [23] One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. [24] Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."

The men to the far left of the table exhibit—to a much greater degree than the others—the initial shock and disbelief that could be expected just after hearing John 13.21: "one of you is going to betray me" (Figure 158). In particular, the figure of Bartholomew exhibits this initial astonishment; he is on his feet, gripping the table with his right hand. His stance is forward, as if he were about to spring into action. He gazes intently in the

direction of Christ who has presumably just spoken.[190] Andrew appears to have been caught unawares. He "surrenders" with hands thrown upward in confusion or distrust. His eyebrows are raised with a frowning look of worry, or perhaps disbelief.[191] Meanwhile, James Minor leans toward him with one hand placed on Andrew's shoulder and the other on Peter's arm. It is possibly a gesture of worry, but it could also be seen as reassurance and unity. He seems to want to anchor the two groupings of men together. The combination of the three appears to enact the verse John 13:22, "His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant." Considering their placement at the end of the table, Bartholomew, Andrew and James Minor are the only group that looks in the direction of Christ and, in doing so, also toward all the others.

The next grouping of Judas, Peter and John is significant, both for their arrangement and their possible symbolism (Figure 159). In the seating order, Peter is furthest to the left, followed by Judas and John. Traditionally John and Peter flank Christ, but sometimes they are depicted seated next to one another to one side of Christ (see note 186). Leonardo's positioning of three is particular since Judas has been placed between Peter and John. The arrangement may represent the three ages of man since they are seated from eldest to youngest. In the composition, however, Peter's head appears

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[190] Though nearly impossible to discern form the current condition of the mural, it appears that Bartholomew's feet are crossed at the ankles. Luigi Bossi (*The Last Supper of Leonardo da Vinci* [1811]) suggested that perhaps the movement of jumping to his feet had been so sudden that he did not uncross them in time. But it is certainly an odd and uncomfortable position for one to stand up in. Steinberg views the position as highly symbolic and traces it to representation of the Crucifixion and the Deposition, in which Christ's legs are often crossed at the ankles. The *Golden Legend* relates that Bartholomew may have been flayed, or he may have been crucified. Steinberg views the symbolism as perhaps a marker for either the impending crucifixion of Christ or Bartholomew's understanding that he was designated to be among the martyrs. (Steinberg 101-109)

[191] Even today in Italy, a similar gesture of the mouth and eyebrows, and occasionally the palms thrown upward, paired with the interjection, *"Mah!?"* signals uncertainty, not knowing, incredulity, even disagreement.

between that of Judas and John. In my view, this arrangement serves to create a symbolic middle ground separating the saint from the sinner, the true follower from the traitor. This is made apparent when we consider that it may foreshadow Peter's triple denial of Christ. His 'crime' was not as drastic as Judas' betrayal, but he is not as innocent as John. I would venture to say that Peter (who holds the keys to Heaven) is a figure that could represent Purgatory. He is caught between the treachery of Hell (represented by Judas) and the purity of Heaven (John). Even the positioning of the three heads imitates an uprising slope which, like a pathway, peaks at the head of Christ. Judas is placed below the others. Dante, as we recall, relegated him to the lowest pit of Hell, where he is eternally ravaged by "God's fairest" (Lucifer), who had also betrayed.[192] Peter, is not perfect; he "is clean, but not all" (John 13.10). He is perhaps the most 'human' among the disciples. It was Peter, after all, that Christ chose to lead the faithful. John was the most beloved; he exemplifies the grace of God. According to the Golden Legend, when John died "he was in that clearness borne into heaven body and soul," like a Christian Ganymede.

The gospel of John 13:23-25 reads: "One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. [24]Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "ask him which one he means." [25]Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" This request implies Peter's self-doubt, and similarly it also foreshadows the prophecy of Peter's denials. Instead of asking on his own accord, Peter defaults to John. Within this particular grouping of figures, there seems to be no doubt that Leonardo has chosen to

192 "'That soul up there who bears the greatest pain,' said the master, 'is Judas Iscariot, who has his head within [one of Lucifer's three mouths] and outside flails his legs." Dante, *Inferno* 34:61-63

depict this particular passage from John since this action is not recorded by the other evangelists. In nearly all other contemporary interpretations of the *Last Supper*, John leans toward Christ, in reference to John 13:23. But here, Leonardo deliberately depicts John 13:24; John leans toward Peter, who whispers in his ear. John the Evangelist is also the only disciple Leonardo's mural who does not appear rattled by the unfolding events. His clasped hands and sad yet serene, or dreamy, expression communicate his acceptance of Christ's destiny and underscore his unshakable faith.

However, not all the details represented by in this group of figures are identifiable in the verses found in the Gospel of John. In John's account, Judas receives the already dipped sop from Christ and therefore plays a passive role. In Leonardo's mural, Judas reaches for the bread. Ideally this should prove that Judas is actively completing, or is just about to complete the action. Christ's pre-knowledge of his betrayer allows him to focus on Judas via his outstretched right hand. The hand of Judas appears to act out of instinct. Despite Judas' attention being turned toward the whispers between Peter and John, his hand reaches for the bread out of instinct. The powerful right hand of Christ looks as if it has a magnetic hold on that of Judas; it is as if Divine Will were simply commanding destiny. The action depicted here may come from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, in which the verb used to describe the identification of the traitor is *intinguit*: the third person, present, active indicative tense of the verb *intinguere*. Judas' hand, whether driven by instinct or design, actively reaches for the bread: a symbol of material, corporeal sustenance. Since this bread has not yet undergone the transubstantiation, it is

not yet a symbol of Spiritual nourishment. His material greed, which may be identified in the money bag clutched in his right hand, also underscores his guilt.

At the exact center of the composition in utter calm and quiet acceptance sits Christ, isolated from the others, in a niche formed by the window frame (Figure 160). The unfortunate condition of the mural renders it difficult to determine if the mouth of Christ is open or closed. Whether he is speaking or in between sentences—as mentioned above—has been the topic of long debates, since it is considered as a marker for determining *the* moment depicted. I believe this portion of the painting could refer to Christ's second pronouncement and relates to either (or both): Matthew 26:23 ("Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me") or Mark 14:20 ("It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me").[193] The moment that Christ identifies the traitor, not *by name*, but *by action*, is the key to the outcome of Christ's last meal with his Apostles and its significance.

As the physical and moral center of the composition, this moment should represent the hinge around which both the previous and subsequent actions of the scene revolve. Perhaps it would be more accurate—given the perfect equilateral triangle that is formed by his figure—to call Christ the fulcrum upon which both sides are balanced. In any case, both analogies are in keeping—quite literally, I may add—with the Christocentrism of the Dominican order at Santa Maria delle Grazie, as well as with Thomistic doctrine. In narrative terms this central "frame" acts as the climax of the story. Its narrative resolution will be found in the institution of the Eucharist, which is only

[193] It is less likely that it should refer to Luke 22:21 ("But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table.") since there are other Apostles in Leonardo's mural whose hands

suggested, but not effectively portrayed by Leonardo. The active hands of Christ may, in fact, offer a foreshadowing of the consecration of the bread and wine; his right hand reaches out toward the bread, and the left, toward the wine. The right hand is turned palm-downward, in a condemning position. The muscles are taut, conveying the tension in guiding the hand of the traitor toward the bread of betrayal. Meanwhile, his left hand is relaxed and gentle; with its palm facing upward it seems to offer the bread that will redeem.

Another nod to St. Thomas Aquinas may be read in Christ's posture. With his head bent toward his heart and arms outstretched, the pose, in my opinion, is very reminiscent of the representations of the pelican, a symbol often associated with Jesus' sacrifice. In St. Thomas' Eucharistic hymn, *Adoro te devote*, the penitent invokes the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, the Pio Pellicano.[194] In his bestiary, Leonardo writes of the pelican, "this bears a great love to its young; and if it finds them slain in the nest by a serpent it pierces itself to the heart in their presence, and by bathing them with a shower of blood it restores them to life."[195] It is possible that Christ's pose is meant to be a preview of the blood to be spilled and the blood that will redeem.

As for the other groupings, on the right, their gestures are quite different from the left side of the painting. More than the display of initial shock and self-doubt, these men are in search of an explanation, perhaps as to the identification of the traitor. Phillip and Thomas appear to look directly at Christ, but James, whose arms are flung wide,

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[194] *Pie pellicane, Jesu Domine, me immundun munda tuo sanguine, Cujus una stilla salvum facdeere, totum mundum quit ab omni scelere*. (O loving Pelican! O Jesu Lord! Unclean I am but cleanse me in Thy Blood; Of which a single drop, for sinners spilt, Can purge the entire world from all its guilt.)

[195] "*Il Pelicano - Questo porta grand amore a' sua nati, e trovando quelli nel nido morti dal serpente, si punge a riscontro al core, e col suo piovente sangue bagnandoli li torna in vita*" Leonardo, *Bestiario*, 38.

incredulous and disgusted, appears to have his eyes trained on Judas (Figure 161). These postures would not have gone unnoticed by the Dominicans. That of James Major is quite similar to St. Dominic's sixth mode of prayer from the *De modo orandi*, the invocation of Divine Power. Similarly, Phillip's heartfelt bow of compassion and arms pointing to self is reminiscent of the first mode of prayer and symbolizes reverence. Thomas' gesture, pointing toward Heaven with his index finger, is a pronouncement of faith in the one True God, and of the salvation of the immortal soul. It is also a reminder of the fulfillment of Christ's destiny, and would frequently appear in Leonardo's work. The gesture appears in one of the background figures in his *Adoration of the Magi*, in his cartoon for the *Madonna and St Anne*, and also in his *St. John the Baptist* (Figure 162).

I would like to think that this group might also exemplify the only verses which appear to be nearly identical in three of the four gospels—Matthew 26:24, Mark 14:21, and Luke 22:22: "'The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.'"[196] Christ pronounces the words, but the gestures of the Apostles seem to emphasize their meaning. This manner of accentuating is the very purpose of the gestures listed in the *De modo orandi*, which were performed to enhance the power of the words said in prayer. The Apostles speak for Christ, via their actions. Therefore they perform their precise mission: to spread the word of God. The gestures of Thomas, James and Phillip suggest that they have already assumed their mantle.

[196] In Luke 22:22, the final sentence, "it would be better for him if he had not been born" is omitted. The Gospel of Luke also places these statements after the Institution of the Eucharist.

The effect, as I have illustrated above, is somewhat like a play, or a pantomime. These three apostles enact the Word of God with their gestures, and by doing so, they enhance the narration by making the words more powerful. The gestures give emphasis to a moment of the Last Supper narrative that is not usually depicted. Thomas, with his finger pointed up to the skies, seems to evoke the prophesized meaning of "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him." It is interesting that it should be Thomas, known for his doubtfulness, to be the Apostle to enact this particular gesture of divine decree. It is as if to say that not even Thomas would question the Word of God. James Major's arms are flung wide, and his look of revulsion aimed at Judas seems to imply, "But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man!" It is a clear warning to those who would betray God. Finally, Phillip's look of compassion may suggest knowledge of the eternal punishment of Judas' betrayal, "It would be better for him if he had not been born."

The pair of James and Phillip offer two sides of the emotional coin of reaction. James reminds us of the wrath of God, of Dante's *contrapasso,* or the punishment to fit the crime. Phillip, on the other hand, could emulate the Christian sense of compassion and of forgiveness for those who repent. When we consider that the very role of the Apostles was to preach Christ's message, it is not difficult to see that Thomas, James, and Phillip, as True Believers, are employing their gestures as extensions of Christ's words. Even though the Apostles in Leonardo's painting have not yet received the consecrated bread and wine, according to Thomistic doctrine, the conviction and mindset of the

individual was enough to provide spiritual nourishment and transform that individual into Christ.[197]

If our imaginary camera is still panning across the scene, and the off-camera narration continues to follow the text, Matthew, Thaddeus and Simon (Figure 163) should theoretically enact Matthew 26.25: "Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, 'Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?' Jesus answered, 'You have said so.'" However, Judas' doubt is not what is being depicted by these three Apostles. The traitor has already identified himself, through his actions, reaching for the bread, clutching his payment. Alternatively, *if* Judas has not yet been identified, this grouping of three could also be a reference to Luke 22:23, "They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this." Unfortunately, I find both of these to be rather unlikely propositions, though the passage from Luke is certainly more plausible, given their gestures.

In the previous grouping, James' eyes were trained on Judas, and his expression was one of disgust. Ideally these elements, coupled with Judas' auto-piloted hand, should already designate him as the traitor. Like any good suspense writer, Leonardo needs only to give his viewer the indication of the perpetrator, which is fully attained through Judas' hand that extends toward the bread. The audience does not need to see the act happening (the dipping of the bread) to know what happens in this narrative. Thomas' gesture has assured us that it *will happen*; it is part of the Divine Plan. James' reaction shows us that

[197] "...but spiritual food changes man into itself, according to that saying of Augustine (Confess. vii), that he heard the voice of Christ as it were saying to him: 'Nor shalt thou change Me into thyself, as food of thy flesh, but thou shalt be changed into Me.' But one can be changed into Christ, and be incorporated in Him by mental desire, even without receiving this sacrament [i.e. the Eucharist]." (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III:73. art 3)

is happening, that Judas is taking or dipping the bread. Phillip's gesture gives us the confirmation that deed *has been done* and nothing can be done to stop the momentum of what is to happen next. It is almost a prefect pictorial display of Heraclitus' river of time analogy, which Leonardo had jotted down in his book.

The gestures of Matthew, Thaddeus and Simon, who have certainly begun to "to question among themselves," may not be discussing *who* did it, put perhaps *why* he did it. They appear to be talking about Judas, or perhaps, more likely, their uncertain future. It seem more plausible that this triad represents the final verse of the account in the book of Luke: 22:24 "A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest." The upturned hands of all three suggest a search for answers: *what shall we do?—who will guide us? –what happens now?* This silent, but urgent questioning and search for answers posed by Leonardo's figures may also lead us to the inferred, yet not specifically depicted solution: the Institution of the Eucharist. The hands of all three of these Apostles are not only upturned, they all point back toward the center of the composition. As our eye rides the crest of the wave formed by their hands, it conducts us back to the Teacher, back to the one person who can restore the calm and answer their queries. The arc of that wave formed by their hands falls directly onto another upturned palm. It is the left hand of Jesus that extends outward toward the spectator, offering us the bread (Figure 164). Christ looks down at the hand that offers the bread, the symbol of Christ's body that would be taken in his memory: an act performed regularly by the Dominicans at Santa Maria delle Grazie. Even the subtle suggestion of the Eucharist would have sufficed for such an indoctrinated audience.

Viewer participation: performing the Eucharistic liturgy in three acts

Leonardo's *Last Supper* gives the illusion that, along with the painted Apostles, the beholders (*i.e.* the Dominicans of Santa Maria delle Grazie and their guests) are active participants in the perpetually unfolding and cyclical event. The immediacy of the experience is what is most striking. All the Apostles are involved; they are fully and emotionally invested in what is happening. There is no need for invitations offered through Albertian glances toward the audience. The turbulent situation already beckons our attention and involvement. In Ghirlandaio's *Cenacoli* at Ognissanti and San Marco, or Cosimo Rosselli's at the Vatican, at least one of the table companions, connects with the viewer through a melancholy gaze. Perugino's Judas looks directly at the beholder, as does his James Minor. Andrea del Castagno's Apostles at Sant'Apollonia are absorbed in their individual thoughts; they take no heed of either the viewer and very little of one another. The excitement in Leonardo's mural and the wealth of gestures and emotions expressed through their faces and hands draw the viewer inside. We want to know what caused the commotion; we too must help identify the traitor—a task that is completed for us in the other *Cenacoli,* due to Judas' placement on the opposite side of the table. With Leonardo, we are thrown into a state of confusion along with the disciples. Their despair and concerns are projected toward the spectators, who are ultimately involved in this existential crisis.

We can view the confusion and the turmoil in the scene like the ripples that disturbed the calm waters. Jesus made the announcement that, like a pebble being dropped in a pond, set off a wave-like series of reactions. In physics, once the energy of

the waves dissipates, and as long as there are no other disruptions, the water returns to its state of calm. Within Leonardo's composition, there is both order and chaos simultaneously. The highly symmetrical architecture of the room is the order, while the temporary emotional flare up of the Apostles—caused by the alarm of a traitor amongst them—is the chaos that must be put back to order. In an analogous manner, we might view the consecration of the bread and wine as Jesus' way of calming of the waters and bringing order out of chaos. Leonardo, as mentioned previously, does not specifically depict the Sacrament; he only alludes to it through the presence of the bread and the wine on the table, and the position of Christ's hands near them.

The Institution of the Eucharist signals Christ's great sacrifice and the act of redemption. Judas taints both the literal bread (dipping the sop, marking him as the traitor) and the spiritual bread (by kissing Jesus), while the wine symbolizes the blood spilled though his betrayal. By purifying these symbols they become the spiritual nourishment to carry forward the message of Christ. In the accounts of Matthew and Mark, the consecration of the bread and wine takes place just after the identification of the traitor. Looking at the mural, as our eye travels toward the far right wall, the extended arms of Matthew, Thaddeus and Simon act as a convenient book-end. Their questioning limbs redirect the viewer's attention back to the center, back to Christ. Christ's outstretched hands extend toward the spectator, and hover purposefully over the bread and wine. Rather than the explicit portrayal the Institution of the Eucharist—the veritable solution to the existential and spiritual crisis faced by the gesturing Apostles—Leonardo's Christ appears to extend this privilege to the physical space of the spectators,

to the members of the Dominican order at Santa Maria delle Grazie.[198] It is their clerical duty to propagate the faith, and their privilege to recite the liturgy of the Eucharist in remembrance of the Last Supper. The communal meal is therefore, their daily reenactment of Christ's sacrifice and the Eucharistic prayer, a reminder to nourish both body and soul. The men in the physical space of the refectory are the product of the dissemination of the faith by the original disciples; there are the legacy of the men portrayed in the symbolic Upper Room. By projecting the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy toward the viewers, the *Last Supper* breaks down the fourth wall to include its audience of fortunate witnesses.

There is a level of performativity and theatrics in Leonardo's *Last Supper* which, in my opinion, has largely been overlooked in the scholarship surrounding this masterpiece. One must always consider the location of this mural: the refectory of a monastery, which was not a public space. Time and ritual form the basis of monastic life. The day is divided into the liturgical hours. Each hour, like a script, dictates the prayers and actions—the *ora et labora*—to be performed by the brethren, day in and day out. Mealtimes in the refectory (necessary for both physical and spiritual nourishment) were part of that daily ritual, and they were equally as regimented. The friars took their places at the long tables set along the side walls, while the prior and the elders would sit at the

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[198] Leatrice Mendelsohn has also alluded to a similar extension of the completion of the narrative action toward the public in her essay, "Simultaneity and the Paragone: Justifying Art in the Eye of the Beholder," p 14-15. "The events, based on separate but related dialogue, are understood by Steinberg as visibly intended for the spectator alone. The question of whether the disciples, witnesses to the painting's narrative, are simultaneously aware of the institution of the Eucharist is not, in my opinion, clear from their reactions. Whether we accept Steinberg's interpretation that reads the action as 'real time,' postulating successive events, or read the painting as presenting a single emblematic gesture that conflates the naming of Judas with a meditation on the consequences of Christ's betrayal (that is, the transubstantiation), the synthesis must be accomplished by the viewer."

head table.[199] Following the Rule of St. Benedict, meals were taken in silence, though there would be a reading: something to contemplate and satisfy the soul whilst restoring corporeal needs. Further stimulus was offered through the art that decorated these halls. The common decorative motif of the fourteenth and fifteenth-century Tuscan tradition was a *Last Supper* on one of the end walls. Not only was the topic befitting to the purpose of the refectory, it acted as a symbolic fourth table in the room: the eternal head table that counterbalanced the temporal head table. Leonardo placed his table at the foreground of the picture plane, to enhance its realistic presence in the physical space of the refectory. Additionally, he placed Judas on the far side of the table with the others. By doing so, he opened the scene to the spectators, allowing them to participate, as opposed to merely witnessing. The modern-day disciples are thus made actors in this recurring drama.

It is important to remember that seated at head table were not only the prior and convent elders, but also esteemed guests. One of these guests was the benefactor responsible for a large part of the construction and decoration of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the Sforza Duke, Ludovico il Moro, who was said to dine there twice a week. With this in mind, viewing the *Last Supper* as a piece of dramatic entertainment becomes much more relevant and easier to imagine. Il Moro—who continued his father's

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[199] "We have, in our travels, seen this refectory, several years ago, yet undestroyed. Opposite to the entrance, at the bottom, on the narrow side of the room, stood the Prior's table; on both sides of it, along the walls, the tables of the monks, raised, like the Prior's , a step above the ground: and now, when the stranger, that might enter the room, turned himself about, he saw, on the fourth wall, over the door, not very high, a fourth table, painted, at which Christ and his Disciples were seated, as if they formed part of the company. It must, at the hour of the meal, have been an interesting sight, to view the tables of the Prior and of Christ, thus facing each other, as two counterparts, and the monks at their board, enclosed between them." (Goethe, *Observations on Leonardo's Last Supper*, 7)

construction plans for Santa Maria delle Grazie—made them even more ambitious by designating it as the location of the Sforza family mausoleum. He employed his best court artists, Bramante and Leonardo. Santa Maria delle Grazie essentially became an extension of the court: the Duke's church. In the years immediately prior to Leonardo's work at Santa Maria delle Grazie, part of his employment at the ducal court had included theatrical entertainment. Knowing this about Leonardo—and considering the duke's political use of cultural propaganda and courtly spectacle—it urges the question whether these theatrical productions may have influenced his art or his understanding of performance and narrative.

Leonardo and theater at the Sforza court

At the Sforza court, Leonardo was exposed to courtly entertainment and *feste,* which were used to promote the legitimacy of the tyrant, Ludovico il Moro. These would have included music, singing, poetry, jesters, mimes, and theater in the form of *ingegni* (mechanisms/marvels), *trionfi* (triumphs)], *sacre rappresentazioni (*mystery pays), *tableau vivant* and *commedie* (plays). In Vasari's *Vita di Leonardo*, he emphasizes that Ludovico il Moro summoned Leonardo to Milan to play the lute for him. Vasari recognizes the artist's superior musical talents, as well as his ability to improvise rhymes and entertain the duke.[200] There is evidence that Leonardo was also employed to create

[200] "Fu condotto a Milano con gran riputazione Lionardo a 'l Duca Francesco, il quale molto si dilettava del suono de la lira, perché sonasse: e Lionardo portò quello strumento, ch'egli aveva di sua mano fabricato d'argento gran parte, accioché l'armonia fosse con maggior tuba e piú sonora di voce. Laonde superò tutti i

innovative stage designs, fantastical costumes and other *ingegni* for theatrical performances made to impress the audience. Oddly enough, Vasari neglects to mention Leonardo's involvement in stage architecture and the mechanical engineering of props for such theatrical performances at the Sforza court.

As a means of establishing their court Ludovico il Moro, and especially his wife Beatrice d'Este, sought to promote the literary and theatrical production of their realm, emulating other enlightened rulers of the period such as the Este, and the Gonzaga. In 1493, the *de facto* Duke inaugurated his court theater with the debut performance of *Mopsa e Daphne*, which he had commissioned Niccolò da Correggio to write for the occasion.[201] While it is uncertain whether Leonardo participated in this production, it should not be completely discounted. Information regarding Leonardo's contributions to Milanese theater dates back to 1490 and comes to us through the Florentine poet Bellincioni, who had previously been employed by Lorenzo il Magnifico. In a collection of his poetry, published in 1493, Bellincioni introduces his *operetta, La festa del paradiso* performed for the wedding celebration of Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Isabella d'Aragona in 1490. In it, he describes Leonardo's involvement with the production:

> The following operetta composed by Mr. Bernardo Belinzon is a feast or performance called *Paradiso*, which was commissioned by Sir Ludovico in honor of the Duchess of Milan: and it is called *Paradiso* because there Paradise was built, with the great ingenuity and art of Maestro Leonardo Vinci from Florence, with all seven planets which revolved, and the planets were represented by men, described by the poets in form and

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musici, che quivi erano concorsi a sonare; oltra ciò fu il migliore dicitore di rime a l'improviso del tempo suo." - Vita di Lionardo da Vinci

201 Cecilia Mary Ady, *A History of Milan under the Sforza.* (London: Methuen & co., 1907), 300-301.

> dress, and all these planets gave spoke in praise of the Duchess Isabella as you will discover by reading it.[202]

Fortunately, a more detailed account of Leonardo's elaborate stage design was recorded by Jacopo Trotti, Ambassador of the Este court.[203] The stage was elevated above the hall and was itself divided into upper revolving scene and lower fixed scene. The upper section, built in the shape of a half egg, consisted in seven revolving planets upon which stood the actors impersonating Jove and the other Olympian gods. They seemed suspended in mid-air. Above them, there were luminous glass balls that represented the starry constellations of the zodiac. Below the heavens, there was a hill upon which the actors could walk. The orchestra was hidden behind stage structures, giving the appearance that the music emanated as if by magic. Nino Pirrotta describes the performance as a combination of sacred and profane where "music, song, recitation and pantomime are of equal importance."[204] The *Last Supper*, in its own way, is somewhat similar. The "action," which is made circular through the communicating limbs and spatial arrangement of the apostles, is situated in a very realistic, yet fictive space, above

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202 "*La sequente operetta composta da Meser Bernardo Belinzon è una festa o vero ripresentatione chiamata Paradiso, qual fece far il Signor Ludovico in laude della Duchessa di Milano: et chiamasi Paradiso però che v'era fabricato con il grande ingegno et arte di Maestro Leonardo Vinci fiorentino il Paradiso con tutti li setti pianeti che girava, et li pianetti erano representati da homini in forma et habito che se descriveno dalli poeti, li quali pianetti tutti parlano i' laude della prefata Duchessa Isabella come vederai legendola*." from "Rime del arguto et faceto poeta Bernardo Belinzone fiorentino." Firenze, 1493, ff. t 4v-t5r reproduced in *Leonardo da Vinci i documenti e le testimonianze contemporanee*. p. 77, my translation.

203 See Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Codice Italiano DXXI a J 4 21, *Raccolta di varii monumenti istorici e varie narrazioni*, ff. 283-287 (Relazione dell'ambasciatore estense Jacopo Trotti, 13 gennaio 1490), reproduced in *Leonardo da Vinci i documenti e le testimonianze contemporanee*, op. cit. pp. 48-56

204 Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo**,** *Music and theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi*; translated by Karen Eales. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 293.

the audience. Like the music that seemed to emanate magically, their gestures appear to speak, despite the absence of sound.

In 1496, Leonardo was again in charge of the stage design for Baldassare Taccone's *Danae,* presented at the palace of Gian Francesco Sanseverino. Based on the information left in Taccone's stage directions, no clear image of the stage can be drawn. It appears, though, that the scene consisted of a lower portion representing Earth and an upper suspended area portraying Olympus, which revolved to "open up all at once," revealing the divinities. Mercury, the messenger god, by means of one of Leonardo's ingenious inventions, could be seen flying between both realms. It is, however, unclear which mechanisms Leonardo utilized to achieve this flight. A preparatory drawing and notes related to the *Danae,* housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, illustrates a figure seated within flaming *mandorla,* labeled *annunziatore* and is perhaps related to the actor playing the role of Apollo, who reads the prologue.[205] Additional drawings in Leonardo's notebooks (Arundel, fol. 224r and 231v) exhibit what appear to be stage designs for a production of Poliziano's *Fabula di Orfeo*. The sketches for the set resemble a massive mountain that by means of a mechanism would rotate to reveal Hades and the underworld. Some scholars such as Traumann Steinitz have tried to link these drawings to productions of either the *Fabula* or the subsequent *Orphei Tragoedia,* slated for 1490 and 1491, neither of which actually came to fruition. More recent studies by Carlo Pedretti, establish a later date for the sketches and propose that they were meant for a

[205] Pirrotta, 296.

production to be performed for the court of Charles d'Amboise whom Leonardo served from 1506-1511.[206]

Leonardo's innovative stage design, incorporating both the fixed lower platform and the dynamic upper level, was an immense, albeit short-lived, success. The history of Renaissance stage design did not follow the path of Leonardo. Instead, the trend turned the direction of the single point perspective cityscape, such as would later be seen in Ariosto's debut of *La Cassaria* (1508). Pirrotta and Attolini agree that Leonardo's contribution to stage design was the "concept of a unified spectacle in a single and identifiable place" and that his method of observing like a scientist and creating with fantasy made him a precursor of Baroque theater.[207] I believe the same can be said about the *Last Supper*, in the sense that it emulates the idea of combining both fixed and dynamic, science and fantasy. Leonardo provides an extremely geometric and balanced three-dimensional space for his disciples and their Master. At the same time, he breathes life and energy into them through their animated and emphatic gestures. The unified spectacle, or sequence of actions, unfolds across a single, identifiable space. If anything, this contact and experience with the world of courtly spectacle may have had some influence on how Leonardo came to his final compositional decisions. It may be worth considering whether the occasional presence of Duke Sforza—a man accustomed to courtly entertainment— may have any effect on the composition of the mural.

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[206] See Pirrotta's note on page 290.

[207] The quote is from Pirrotta, p. 298, and the comment on Baroque theater is found in Attolini, p. 110.

The real beauty of Leonardo's *Last Supper,* as in several of his works, is found in its subtle ambiguity: in the enigma that leaves us questioning them after five hundred years. We can conclude that his *Last Supper* does not depict one precise moment in a story, but one entire episode, like a scene from a play. Like a sequence of Eadweard Muybridge freeze frames, Leonardo's *Last Supper* dissects the brief span of time needed for this narrative episode into stop-action frames. But unlike a sequence of motion captures of a single subject, each of Leonardo's frames captures a succession of actions that spans the duration of the Last Supper narrative(s). The composition of the Last Supper imitates the flow of how we experience events in real time, mimicking nature's river of time. Imagine sitting round a table or participating in a conversation with a group of friends. It would be impossible to concentrate on each individual simultaneously. If one friend tells a joke and I am focused on him, I cannot focus on all the others at the same time. At the delivery of the punch line, I am unable to focus on each person's individual reactions in one glance. It necessarily occurs in several stages, in several glances, and my eye perceives each individual moment as a continuous flow.

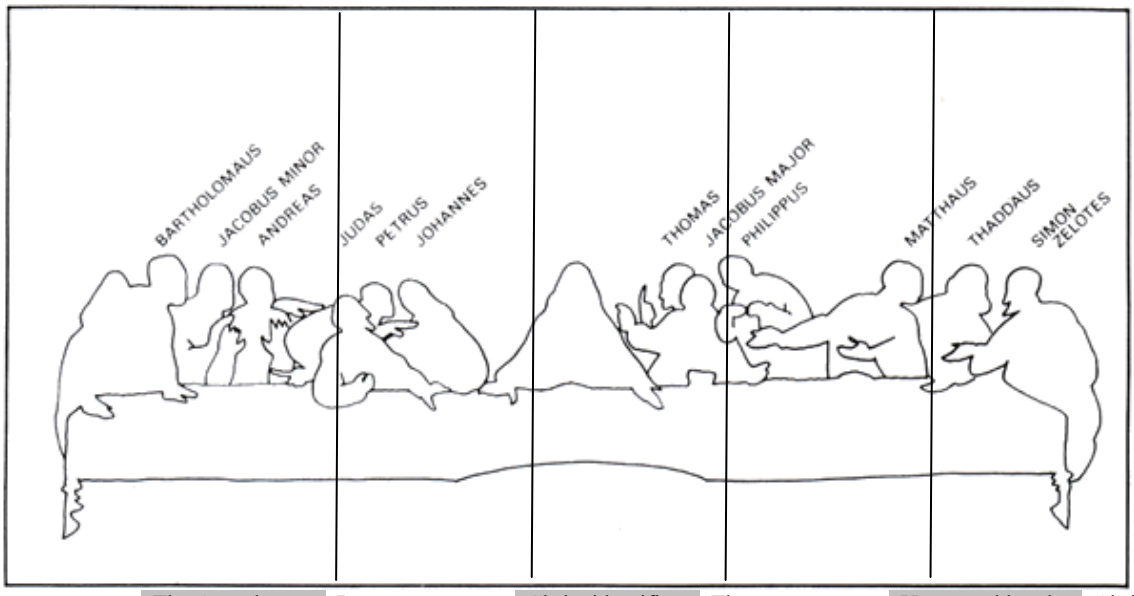
Leonardo has captured for us the singular expressions and emotions experienced by the each Apostle at a particular moment in that span of time, allowing the viewer to examine and contemplate each complex and intense burst of feelings. We have the opportunity to explore the psychological state of each individual's reaction. Leonardo achieved this principally through action, gesture and physiognomy. The emphatic gestures of this theatrical pantomime probably spoke volumes to the Dominican friars of Santa Maria delle Grazie and their guests. It must have provided endless hours of

contemplation during their daily repast. The gesturing Apostles brought to life the dramatic prequel of a scene they were used to enacting on a regular basis: the liturgy of the Eucharist. From the texts, Leonardo has extracted a series of expressions and gestures to represent each man's individual relationship and journey toward God but also the importance of communion and kinship. In his narrative organization, Leonardo has stitched together an evolving sequence of emotions and reactions that occurred over a brief span of time, while at the same time underscoring a sense unity in his cohesive, and perfectly ordered framework.

Table 1 A side-by-side comparison of the Last Supper accounts from the four gospels

Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	John 13
20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21 And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." 22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?" 23 Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." 25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said so." 26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."	17 When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." 19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?" 20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." 22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. 25 "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."	14 When the hour came, Jesus and his Apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." 17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. 21 But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. 22 The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!" 23 They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this. 24A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. **The institution of the Eucharist comes before revelation of the betrayal*	18 "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned against me. 19 "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. 20 Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." 21 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." 22 His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. 23 One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. 24 Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." 25 Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27 As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. **No institution of the Eucharist*

Table 2 A proposed weave of gospel verses that to idenitfy the gestures of Leonardo's apostles.

John 13.2	John 13.22	John 13.23-24	Mark 14:20 Matthew 26:23	Matthew 26:24 Mark 14:21	Luke 22:23 (24?) Matthew 26.25??	
[21] After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."	[22] His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant	[23] One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. [24] Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."	**Mark 20** "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. Matt [23] Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.	"The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."	Luke 22:23 They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this. [24]A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. Matt26:25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said so."	Institution of the Eucharist
						
The initial proclamation	The Apostles react with alarm.	Peter entreats John to intervene on his behalf. Judas instinctively reaches for the bread	Christ identifies the traitor through his action.	The severe words of Christ are "spoken" through the gestures of his devout followers.	Up-turned hands and worried expressions may emulate the fear and confusion of the Apostles, or even a debate. Less likely that this refers to Judas' questioning.	Christ's solution

Chapter 5: Michelangelo's Tipping Points

As we have seen in the previous chapter, in his *Last Supper*, Leonardo da Vinci created a sequence of actions that unfolds and evolves before the spectator. The viewer is presented with a wide and varied spectrum of emotions that represent different discrete moments of the narrative. Despite being presented with simultaneity, the amount of information to process is far too much for the viewer to take in at a single glance. As spectators we need time to view, contemplate and sort out all of this visual information in order to formulate the narrative progression. A similar polynarrative display of action and emotions occurring over a span of time, but represented also with simultaneity, can be discerned from a close reading of Michelangelo's works.

The work of Michelangelo transcends temporal fixedness, providing the sensation of an eternally evolving present. His figures exude a physical, emotional and psychological presence which often places them on the verge of a transformation. These "tipping points," as we shall call them, evoke more than Lessing's pregnant moment; they represent a concept of time that extends beyond the fixed point and they suggest a continuity greater than the immediately previous action and implied future action. Moreover, Michelangelo's works are prone to portray actions and events not linked to or specified in a written source text. In a manner of speaking, they are events or episodes that may be thought of as existing between the lines, or even externally to the narrative, within the psyche of his figures. In this chapter we will explore Michelangelo's capacity to formulate visual narratives from typically non-narrative subject matter. We will also

examine how he transforms traditionally iconic and devotional subject matter that have no Biblical source texts—such as a *Madonna and Child* or a *Pietà*—into veritable narrative moments that appear to evolve through the act of viewer participation.

Simultaneous narrative in the *Battle of Cascina* cartoon

At the turn of the sixteenth-century, the newly appointed Florentine Signoria, intent on creating a Great Council Hall to rival that of Venice, commissioned Leonardo in 1503 and Michelangelo in 1504 to embellish the new space with companion battle scenes recalling two successful Florentine military campaigns. The battle depicted by Michelangelo was that against the Pisans at Cascina in July of 1364, while that of Leonardo was against the Milanese army led by Niccolò Piccinino at Anghiari in June, 1440. Both were battles fought predominately by an army of Florentine citizens and their allies, rather than by paid mercenaries. The purpose of the images was, therefore, to celebrate Florentine might and "civilian preparedness," but also to serve as propaganda—in the wake of the foreign invasions and other tumultuous events of the previous decade—for the establishment of a Florentine militia, an agenda proposed by Machiavelli.[208]

The choice of these two particular battles had been decided by the Signoria, but the specific parts of the battles and the composition may have ultimately left to the

[208] Johann Wilde, "The Hall of the Great Council of Florence" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 7 (1944), 80.

discretion of the artists, allowing each to work to his own strength.[209] The accounts of the Battle of Anghiari tell of equestrian battles allowing Leonardo to demonstrate his immense knowledge of the movement of horses and the art of war.[210] Filippo Villani's account of the Battle of Cascina, on the other hand, included a detail about how the men, overcome by a torrid late July afternoon, sought to cool off by removing their weapons and armor to bathe in the river and seek shade.[211] Not only did this detail allow Michelangelo the opportunity to display his mastery of the human anatomy, it also provided the narrative dilemma which acted as impetus for the battle. One of the Florentine *cavallieri*, Manno Donati, recognizing the vulnerability of the camp, put the inattentive troops to the test by raising the alarm of an enemy attack. According to Villani, he also urged the elderly and weakened captain, Galeotto Malatesta, *condottiero*

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[209] Cecil Gould, "*Battle of Cascina*" in William Wallace, *Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English: Life and Early Works* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 507.

[210] The principal accounts of the Battle were those published in the histories of Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) Flavio Biondo, and Bartolomeo Palatina. All three treated their account of battle differently. Biondo, for example, gave a very detailed description of the topography of the valley, a detail that may have been very useful for Leonardo, who known for his attention to landscape details. Machiavelli also gave an account of the battle in his *Istorie Fiorentine* which focused on the military tactics employed. Although this book was published much later than Leonardo's mural, since Machiavelli was presently employed with the Signoria who chose these battles to bolster the chancellor's plans for a Florentine militia, it should not be entirely discounted that some draft of his account may have also been considered. For information regarding the variation of the accounts see Guy Wilson, "Humanist-Renaissance Battle Accounts",in *In Laudem Caroli: Renaissance and Reformation Studies for Charles G. Nauert.* James V. Mehl, ed. (Kirksville, MO: The Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1998), 135-48; Niccolò Capponi, *La battaglia di Anghiari: il giorno che salvò il Rinascimento* (Milano:Il Saggiatore, 2011).

[211] "*...s'era disarmata, e quale si bagnava in Arno, quale si sciorniava al meriggio, e chi disarmandosi in alto modo prendea rinfrescamento. E il capitano, si perche` molto era attempato, si perche` del tutto ancora libero non era della terzana, se n'era ito nel letto a riposare senza avere considerazione quanto fosse vicino all'astuta volpe, e al volpone vecchio Giovanni dell'Aguto [...] il valente Cavaliere messer Manno Donati, come colui a cui toccava la faccenda nell'onore, andando provveggendo il campo e i modi che la gente dell'arme tenea, conosciuto il ran pericolo in che il campo stave, e temendo che nel fatto non giocasse malizia, e dove no, quello che ragionevolmente secondo uso e costume di guerra ne dovea e potea avvenire, e tantosto n'avvenne, mosso da fervente zelo, incomincio` a destare il capo, e dire, noi siamo perduti, e con queste parole se n'ando` al capitano, e lo mosse a commettere in messer Bonifazio Lupi e in altri tre e in lui la cura del campo...*" F. Villani, *Cronaca*, libro XI, pp. 396-398

and lord of Rimini, to send troops to reinforce the front lines.[212] Donati's ruse was successful and the troops arrived just in time. John Hawkwood, the English *condottiero* commanding the Pisan forces, saw Florentine army's disarray and seized the opportunity to launch a series of attacks to test the Florentine defenses. Ultimately, however, the Florentines were the victors.

The action of Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* begins with the pivotal call to arms, which in turn, sparks the reactions of the bathing soldiers. This is represented by the wild-eyed man at the center, who lunges forward, spear in hand (possibly Donati) and by the heralds and their trumpeting (one at the center and one just behind him in profile). In Leonardo's *Last Supper,* Christ's pronouncement of the "*unus vestrum me traditurus est*" acts as the catalyst for the chain of reactions among the apostles, here too there is a sudden event to ignite the action. The abruptness of the Cascina *Bathers* may appear to be the representation of a pinpointed instant, but the action unfolds in layers of time, albeit over a relatively brief span. What we witness are various stages of the soldiers' rushing to answer the call. It is not instantaneous, but develops over time. Like the *Last Supper*, there is an attention to depict the event from the many perspectives of each individual. Like Leonardo's apostles, Michelangelo's soldiers are a collective force, yet both artists

[212] Villani's account is written in favor of demonstrating the prowess of the Florentine citizen Donati over that of the condottiero Malatesta. Some scholars believe that Michelangelo's source may have been the account of the Battle given by Leonardo Bruni whose *History of the Florentine* people had been translated into the vernacular in 1473. Villani's account, written contemporarily to the event, differs from Bruni's (written several years after the event) in that Villani credits the call to arms as a tactic devised by Donati to muster the men quickly. Bruni's account, on the other hand, describes the surprise attack as a real event. No matter which story is true, the important fact is that the men bathing in the river, treated the threat as real and reacted. See Alessandro Cecchi, "Niccolo` Macchiavelli o Marcello Virgilio Adriani? Sul programma e l'assetto compositivo delle 'Battaglie' di Leonardo e Michelangelo per la Sala del Maggiore Consiglio in Palazzo Vecchio", *Prospettiva,* 83-84 (1996), 102-15; Hugo Chapman, *Michelangelo Drawings: Closer to the Master* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 79.

stress the unique experience of each man through their personal reactions, thus allowing the viewer a multifaceted experience of the excitement and the atmosphere of the event, and through it, a vicarious sense of participation.

Based on what we know of Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* through his preparatory drawings and through copies of his cartoon made by students and admirers, the central subject of his mural was the episode of the call to action. While the cartoon was still intact, Bastiano "Aristotile" da Sangallo had made a drawing of the *Battle of Cascina* that included all of the figures of the central portion. Earlier copies of the image, such as the engravings of Agostino Veneziano and Marcantonio Raimondi, had only included a few of the central figures and their "extravagant poses," as Vasari called them. Around 1542, Sangallo—possibly at the behest of Vasari—made a monochrome painting (Figure 165) from his earlier drawing (now lost). This image, located at Holkham Hall, is considered to be the most complete copy of the central portion of Michelangelo's cartoon.

Leonardo's equestrian skirmish for the possession of the standard and the sudden call to arms of Michelangelo's bathing soldiers are, of course, only fragments of larger and more complex narratives. Johann Wilde's studies and reconstruction of the Great Council Hall led him to estimate that the finished size of the murals would have been about 17.5 meters long by approximately 7 meters high, making Michelangelo's bathing men roughly only one quarter to a third of the entire composition. Wilde calculates that Leonardo's skirmish for the standard was also roughly one third of the designated surface

area.[213] The additional sketches and studies of battles from both artists, as well as Vasari's embellished description of the *Battle of Cascina,* may offer ideas as to what would have occupied the remaining sections of the two murals.[214] With this in mind, we must consider the possibility that the mural compositions would have simultaneously represented various temporal moments of the battles. Claire Farago, in fact, surmises that Leonardo's complete mural would have been "an integrated narrative in three episodic scenes within a spatially unified landscape setting" and that his innovation was to "join and integrate the interrelated episodes formally and thematically."[215] What Farago has described—and Cecil Gould and Gunther Neufeld have attempted in their reconstructions

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[213] J. Wilde, "The Hall of the Great Council of Florence", pp. 80 – 81. See also Carmen Bambach, "The Purchases of Cartoon Paper for Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* and Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina*" *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance,* Vol. 8 (1999), 105-133. Wilde also determined from the directionality of the light in both paintings, that in order to mimic the natural light entering the window of the Great Hall, Leonardo's mural would have been located on the south end of the east wall, while Michelangelo's on the north end of the same wall.

[214] Vasari, who had never seen the original cartoon, counted as his "*amicissimo"* (very good friend), Aristotile da Sangallo, who had avidly studied Michelangelo's work. We can assume that Sangallo was Vasari's main source regarding the Cascina cartoon, providing him with a firsthand account of what the mural was to look like. Vasari's description, which may have been influenced by Sangallo's recollections, includes several additional details that are unaccounted for in Sangallo's image. For instance, there are no drummers, despite Vasari double mention of them ("hearing the tumult of the soldiers and the cries and the rolls of the drums. […] Drummers and naked figures with their clothes wrapped in a bundle are also racing toward the fight"). There is at least one naked figure (on the right, above the old man with the ivy garland) with his clothes in a bundle and a sword under his arm, racing toward battle. Conspicuously absent are also the "countless men fighting on horseback to start the scuffle." Villani's account registers over four thousand riders in Florence's army, and during the battle he mentions the cavalry charge led by Heinrich von Montfort Tettnang and his Germans. It is possible that the portions of the image described by Vasari, but not depicted in Sangallo's copy, constituted the portions to the left and the right of the central group of bathing men, but we cannot know for sure. Sketches by Michelangelo believed to be for the Battle of Cascina dating around 1504 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; British Museum) include quick studies of men on the ground fighting with men on others astride charging and rearing horses. In Michelangelo's Uffizi study of the *Battle of Cascina*, many of the figures are recognizable in Sangallo's painting, but there are also others that do not appear. For example, there is a group of three or four men to the left of the composition that are clearly leading the charge, "racing toward the fight," as well as others in the left foreground, possibly shown climbing out of the river, that do not have obvious counterparts in Sangallo's painting.

[215] Claire J. Farago, "Leonardo's Battle of Anghiari: A Study in the Exchange between Theory and Practice" *The Art Bulletin,* Vol. 76, No. 2 (Jun., 1994), 301-330. (p. 301).

of Leonardo's complete mural—is a polynarrative arrangement of various mêlées and skirmishes that took place on the battlefield.[216] We can imagine that Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* also depicted various events of the battle. But based on what we do know of the image, and on Vasari's description, we might see the temporal progression not as an integration of three or more separate events within a landscape but rather something more akin to the progressive action seen in Leonardo's *Last Supper.*

Cecil Gould's reconstructions of the *Battle of Anghiari* and the *Battle of Cascina*, based on the extant copies and preparatory drawings and sketches, propose that both images would have contained three events of their respective battles, each woven into a unified setting.[217] For the Anghiari mural, he imagined three distinct horse battles, with the skirmish for the standard and the strategic bridge placed respectively at the left and right of the center, but set into the middle ground. Gould proposed battle scenes such as those found among Leonardo's sketches at the Accademia in Venice and at the British Museum as likely candidates for the two lateral conflicts.[218] These would have been placed closer to the foreground on either side, giving a concave arrangement to Leonardo's overall composition.

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[216] Cecil Gould, "Leonardo's Great Battle-Piece a Conjectural Reconstruction" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jun., 1954), 117-129; Gunther Neufeld, "Leonardo da Vinci's Battle of Anghiari: A Genetic Reconstruction," *Art Bulletin*, XXXI (September 1949), 170-83. Gould's reconstruction included landscape elements described by Flavio Biondo's account of the battle, such as the bridge that crosses the Tiber, which played a role as the decisive strategic capture.

[217] Gould, "Leonardo's Great Battle," p 119.

[218] See Gould, pp 122-24. Studies such as Leonardo's *Group of riders in the Battle of Anghiari* 1503-04. Black chalk, white highlights, 16 x 19.7 cm. and *Galloping Rider and other figures* 1503-04. Red chalk on paper, 16.8 x 24 cm. both at the Royal Library, Windsor; *Two skirmishes between horses and footmen*, c. 1503, Pen and ink on paper, 14.5 x 15.2 cm. Museo dell'Accademia, Venice, inv. 215A recto.

Conversely, Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina*, according to Gould, would have been more convex in *disegno*, with the central group of the bathers placed closer to the foreground and slightly off-center to the left, while the lateral scenes would have been farther recessed to the middle and background, similar to the arrangement of figures in the *Deluge* scene of the Sistine ceiling (Figure 166Figure **167**). Based on other studies for the Cascina mural and also on details provided by Vasari, Gould predicts that Michelangelo would have included, on the right-hand side, a group of fighting men and, on the left, a group of soldiers and riders in the background preparing for battle. Studies for these groupings may be seen in the sketch at the Ashmolean Museum (Figure 168). A battle scene with men and horses on the right-hand side of the mural would explain why some of the men from the central portion are leading the charge in that direction.

Based on Vasari's description of the image, which may have been informed by Sangallo's recollections, we might also entertain the idea that Michelangelo would have included a group of bathing soldiers on the left. Vasari's description of the image reads as follows:

> *E lo empié d'ignudi che, bagnandosi per lo caldo nel fiume d'Arno, in quello istante si dava all'arme nel campo, fingendo che gli inimici li assalissero; e mentre che fuor dell'acque uscivano per vestirsi i soldati, si vedeva dalle divine mani di Michele Agnolo disegnato chi tirava su uno, e chi calzandosi affrettava lo armarsi per dare aiuto a' compagni...*
>
> And this he filled with naked men that were bathing in the River Arno because of the heat, when suddenly the alarm sounded in the camp, announcing that the enemy were attacking; and, as the soldiers were springing out of the water to dress themselves, there

> could be seen, depicted by the divine hands of Michelagnolo, some hastening to arm themselves in order to give assistance to their companions…[219]

In Sangallo's copy there are no bathing soldiers; in fact, the only man in the river appears to be drowning. There is also only one man exiting the water although Vasari uses the plural. In Sangallo's painting, the foreground is too shallow to allow for many bathers, but Gould hypothesizes that the original design could have contained a larger area in the foreground where men might have been seen in the river.[220] It is possible that, in his description, Vasari was merely imagining the scene immediately prior to the call to arms. But for the sake of speculation, if Michelangelo had included a group of men bathing in the river and relaxing in the shade on the left of the composition, it may have suggested an action prior to the call to arms. Likewise, it could have been an action simultaneous to the call, but given the distance further upstream perhaps the message had not yet reached them.

Thinking in terms of the overall temporal development of the narrative, if read in the order suggested by Gould, the call to arms would be the motive behind the preparations of the horsemen on the left, followed by the ensuing battle on the right. If there were bathing soldiers on the left, the order of events could be read in a simple left to right fashion. It is, of course, impossible to know what Michelangelo had in mind for the entire composition, but we can imagine that it contained various discreet events

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[219] Vasari, *Vita di Michelangelo*, 655-66 ; *Lives*, vol 2. p. 657. Many of the English translations ignore Vasari's use of an imperfect subjunctive construction of "*fingendo che gli inimici li assalissero*" (feigning that they were being attacked by the enemy) which would give weight to Villani's account (and possibly the popular version), that the call to arms was a convenient ruse to hasten the preparation of the soldiers. Bruni's account relates that the camp really was under attack when the alarm was initially given. Either way, a real attack did ensue. Villani's patriotic account credits the Florentine Manno Donati's good judgment and foresight over the the commander Galeotto Malatesta's lapse in judgment.

[220] Gould, *The Battle of Cascina*, p. 510

simultaneously set in a unified landscape. Speculating about the various groups and their possible arrangements is not required to explore the temporal nature of the composition. The temporal flow in Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* can be discerned even through a study of just the central portion of his cartoon. In fact, this visually dynamic group offers a coherence that allows us to talk about it as its own complete work of art.

The tight knot of figures focuses on the frantic events of the soldiers being caught unawares while bathing in the river. The variety of gestures, poses and expressions present a multifaceted display of the experiences and emotions felt during that tumultuous even. To make sense of what is happening, the viewer must take the time to untangle the group and sort out their individual actions. Much as when we examined the evolution of Leonardo's apostles in the *Last Supper*, we can see how a notional spectator, through a close examination of each individual, may gain a better understanding of the unfolding action.

The catalyst to the action of the event is the warning signal. As Villani described it, Manno Donati roused the troops by shouting "*noi siamo perduti*" (we are doomed!), which undoubtedly set off a chain reaction that swept through the camp. Michelangelo presents us with two heralds trumpeting the call to arms. Around him a chaotic tangle of men represents a sequence of the various stages of response and preparation, suggesting a continuous flow of time. The mature man directly in front of the herald (identifiable possibly as Donati), like Leonardo's Bartholomew, exhibits the greatest deal of surprise, or urgency, as seen in his wide-eyed stare. He charges, spear in hand, toward the riverbank (rather than toward the battle lines), perhaps to alert the others, perhaps to help

pull his comrades out of the water. Behind the heralds there are men who are already dressed in their armor that charge forward, presumably, toward the enemy located to the right. Their open mouths may indicate their shouts recorded in Vasari's description of the image. Other soldiers are in various stages of dressing, some pull on their clothes with more ease than others, as Vasari also described. Some are shown still climbing out of the river, while one is still in the river—perhaps drowning, judging by the gesture of despair of the man on the bank above him.[221]

These details recount small dramas within the overarching drama. As spectators, we pause to watch the elderly man (Figure 169) struggle with pulling his *calzoni* up over his wet skin, we see the strain on his face, and the joviality of his garland that attests to the relaxed atmosphere he had enjoyed just moments before. We see only the hands of the man in the water, but their reach toward the salvation of the shore conveys an imminent sense of loss (Figure 170). The man above him along the banks appears in shock and unable to render aid. He witnesses the event, even draws our attention to it, but instead of reaching out toward the man, his arms are spread wide and retracted at the elbows, the fingers of each hand stiff with fear. From his right forearm there is a line that runs downward, across the back of man seated in a twisting position at the edge of the bank, to the soldier kneeling over the bank with his left arm reaching toward the water. Considered autonomously, the latter's reach is not immediately clear since, in the Holkman Hall painting, there is nothing in the water below him. Read however in the

[221] For an interpretation of the drowning man as a symbol of the drowning death of Piero de'Medici and its political implications in this Republican mural, see Sheila Barker, "The Drowning Man in Michelangelo's Battle of Cascina" in *Renaissance now! : the value of the Renaissance past in contemporary culture*. (Oxford [UK]; New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

context of the drowning man, he can be seen as attempting to lend aid. Perhaps he will grab the man's hand as the current pulls him past; or perhaps, he has just failed to do so. A closer look at the water and how it interacts with the bank and the limbs of the men in the water shows the water rising or breaking on the left-hand side, suggesting the river's current flows toward the right. If the battle appeared to the right of the mural, the river's flow would have mimicked the flow of the action within the composition.

The ever-changing flow of the action is contrary to the constant flow of the river. The various poses of Michelangelo's figures both excite and stall the action intermittently throughout the composition. The urgency of the men dashing off toward the battle, the wide-eyed stare and lunge of the man at the center, the trumpeter, and the men on the left, (one throwing on his vest and the other wildly pointing behind him) speed the action. This, however, is countered by the slower, measured actions of the man fastidiously buttoning his breeches, the other carefully wrapping, or unwrapping, a turban-like length of cloth on his head. Slowing the action even further are the men who appear reluctant to be roused from their slumber: the man on the right reclining along the bank, and the other seated at the center, whose face is partially covered by the soldier in shock over the drowning man. There is also a feeling of transiency in the men exhibiting the strained poses, such as that of the soldier seated on the bank and twisted backward, the man climbing out of the river and the soldier in the back wielding his quarterstaff, among others.

As it stands, we could say that the central portion of the cartoon shows the time that elapsed between the sounding of the alarm, the process of the soldier's reaction to the

call to arms in various stages (emerging from the river, the process of dressing and re-arming oneself), and the response (charging toward battle). All of these actions are occurring over a span of time that slows and quickens. Michelangelo has not depicted a continuous narrative *i.e.* showing the same men first bathing, then responding and then fighting. Rather he has shown all of the various stages of the event through a multitude of different men, each representing a different physical and psychological state, heightened by the implied speed of their actions.

The excitement of fellow artists that came to study the "extravagant poses" (Vasari's term) Michelangelo's bathing soldiers speaks to the novelty of such a composition. But equally as innovative is its depiction of an atypical, almost anecdotal, piece of the narrative. The subject is not entirely invented; Filippo Villani begins his historical account of the battle by mentioning the unbearable heat and how the soldiers sought to refresh themselves by removing their armor, to bathe in the river, or otherwise seek "*rinfrescamento"* (relief from the heat). What Villani's account does not do, but Michelangelo's cartoon does, is give us a visual interpretation of the reaction of the men when they unexpectedly heard the alarm given and their ensuing struggle to prepare for battle. The image represents moments of psychological frenzy that were never described in such detail in the official record. To commemorate this Florentine victory, rather than showcasing a heroic image of soldiers at battle (such as in Antonio del Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes* engraving, ca. 1470-1475), Michelangelo has shown the Florentine army's moment of extreme vulnerability. It does manage to indirectly celebrate the foresight and good judgment of the Florentine soldier, Manno Donati. The purpose of the image, as

suggested by Wilde, was to instruct people about the importance of "civilian preparedness," but here Michelangelo has caught them in a state of unpreparedness. Their chaotic arrangement and disparate poses do not evoke military order and discipline. The urgency and transiency in their gestures and movements do, however, represent the internal chaos felt by each man, as well as the sights, sounds, smells, and adrenaline of the promise of battle.

Temporal circularity in the *Doni Tondo* and *Taddei Tondo*

Michelangelo's undisciplined bathing soldiers and Leonardo's neatly arranged apostles are compositionally very different, but both convey a narrative unfolding that depends significantly on actions, expressions and poses that are manifested by a wide variety of figures. It is not only in large format works (in which numerous figures perform diverse actions with dramatic gestures) that Michelangelo succeeds in rendering an event that suggests a temporal scope of a perpetually evolving present. Two considerably smaller works, produced around the same years of his work on the *Battle of Cascina* cartoon, can also be analyzed in terms of their temporal non-fixedness: the *Doni Tondo* (1503-1504) and the *Taddei Tondo* (1504-1506). Both works were commissioned by private patrons. The *Doni Tondo,* a painting that depicts the Holy Family, was commissioned for the wedding of Agnolo Doni to Maddalena Strozzi. Less is known about the commission of the sculpted *Taddei Tondo* (Figure 174) but given the shape of the work and the subject

matter (a Madonna and Child with St. John) it was likely commissioned to celebrate a wedding or birth in the family.

The subject of the *Doni Tondo* (Figure 171) was rather unique for the time. In the Italian tradition—at least until the Cinquecento—the Holy Family was not as common a subject as the Madonna and Child (with or without St. John or angels). The combination of Mary, Joseph and the infant Christ was usually found in the context of a devotional iconography like the Adoration of the Child (where the parents kneel in reverence around the infant), or within narratives scenes, such as the Nativity, or the Rest on the Flight to Egypt that regularly contained details such as the manger, the star, the ox and the ass. Michelangelo's Holy Family is independent of any of these classifications.

The standard iconography of the *sacra famiglia* is not unlike the iconic images of a Madonna and Child. Mary is often seated, in a pose benefitting the viewer, holding the infant Jesus on her lap. The difference is the addition of Joseph, who is often shown standing behind them or off to the side, removed from the bond between Mother and Child to a secondary role, such can be seen in the painting by Giorgione (Figure 172) ca. 1500. Sometimes Joseph is shown adoring the Child, as in Signorelli's *Holy Family* painted for the Palazzo di Parte Guelfa between 1484-1490 (Figure 173).

Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* composition is innovative and dynamic both for its composition and the monumentality of the central figures, but especially for the interaction between the members of this family unit. Impossible to ignore is the unique and uncomfortable pose of Mary. Seated on the ground with her legs curled up under her and to the right, she also twists her torso around to the right and raises her powerful arms

up and over her right shoulder to receive Christ from (or deliver him to?) Joseph. The athleticism of her body and her active role is unparalleled to that of any other figure in a contemporary work of art. Joseph too assumes an active role as the attentive and caring father, who holds his son firmly and gazes at him lovingly. Michelangelo's wonderfully plump Christ child appear, not as an omniscient being but as an infant should, with a bit of awkwardness and uncertainty about his precarious balance as he is passed between parents. Taken at surface value, the scene is one of familial warmth and intimacy. Only the young St. John in the middle ground is privy to their intimate familial moment, as he gazes with undying love at the Holy Family. The nudes in the background take no notice of what is happening and have no interest in the family, and as such their presence is enigmatic.

Many interpretations as to the philosophical and theological significance of this painting have been put forth, and it is not my intention to critique them or discuss their variations at length. Since Charles de Tolnay, most scholars have interpreted the compositional layout from front to back to designate a sort of historical timeline representing the eras: *ante legam, sub lege* and *sub gratia*.[222] The foreground with the fertile earth and the close-knit family represents the New Testament or the Common Era under Grace. The middle ground with St. John gazing up a Christ and pressed close to low wall that divides the two halves of the painting represents his role as the last prophet of the Old Testament and the first of the New Testament: he who believed even before the coming of Christ. Behind St. John, in the background, stand a group of nudes,

[222] Charles de Tolnay, *The Youth of Michelangelo* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1943) 163-168; Hibbard, 69.

surrounded by parched earth. The interpretation of these figures has proved more challenging but the general consensus is that they represent an *ante legem* era. Given their nudity and the fact that they do not look toward Christ, they may represent unbaptized figures from a pagan past.[223] If this reading is accurate, we could say the Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* telescopes spatially across time, representing past and present and even the division between them simultaneously. But I would venture that any interpretation of the *Doni Tondo* also implies a temporal circularity that will in fact transform this non-narrative work into a story. Furthermore, there are visual clues in the composition itself that suggest such a cyclical nature.

Let us digress for a moment to consider some of Andrée Hayum's views on the meaning of the *Doni Tondo*.[224] I would agree with Hayum's desire not to lose sight of the significance of this painting in its context of a private commission to celebrate a wedding. This was an object to embellish a home and celebrate the union of Agnolo Doni, who was securing a certain prestige by marrying a daughter of the powerful Strozzi family. The round shape of the painting was customary for commemorating a wedding or the birth of a child. Like the wedding ring, a tondo is a symbol of eternity, a never ending cycle. As such, it also represents a physical aspect of the painting that connects to the idea of circularity. Hayum's principal argument is that she feels the painting represents lineage, both for the promising union of Agnolo and Maddalena, but also for their children and their children's children. I would read this as the life cycle being repeated over and over

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[223] Hibbard, p. 69.
[224] Andrée Hayum, "Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo*: Holy Family and Family Myth," in William Wallace, *Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English: Life and Early Works* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 417-441.

again, each generation following the next. Hayum reads the theme of lineage also within the figures in the scene, with the newest generation being of course the Holy Family in the foreground, and the oldest generation, their ancestors in the background. Hayum interprets these ancestors to represent the sons of Noah, and hence Christ's ancestry, dating back to Shem.[225] Moreover, Hayum is certain that the heads carved by Michelangelo on the wooden frame are a visual link to the heads on Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*, at the Baptistery of San Giovanni. The sacrament of baptism is an entry point that leads to another to another series of cycles: religious rites and sacraments, liturgical calendars and the celebration of annual holidays, the promise of life after death and resurrection.

We must also consider where this painting was located and its function. A private commission for the Doni household, no doubt, the tondo served as an auspicious symbol for a healthy and prosperous family. As a centerpiece for a private home, Michelangelo's depiction of the Holy Family's relationship may have served an edifying purpose, for generations of Doni, as a model regarding the roles and proper conduct within the family. Not unlike the figure of Joseph in Ghirlandaio's Sassetti *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Michelangelo's Joseph assumes a more active role. Steinberg interpreted Joseph to symbolize God the father and, therefore, Mary to represent a subordinate filial position.[226] Mirella Levi d'Ancona further developed their relationship to signify that the

[225] Andrée Hayum, 423-24.

[226] See Leo Steinberg, "Michelangelo's Divine Circle," *Vogue*, Dec. 1974, 138-139. Steinberg initially interpreted the close interlocking positions of Mary and Joseph to be physically sensual. His father-daughter interpretation is a concept that may not have been far from Michelangelo's mind. The interpretation of Mary as both daughter/mother has also been suggested in regards to the youth of Mary in

father figure had been restored to his role as *capofamiglia:* his head is at the apex of the hierarchical pyramid, almost on an equal level with the son, the heir.[227] But Joseph is also shown as a loving and attentive father, taking an active interest in his son's wellbeing and education, as the Doni men should also do. Mary is at a subordinate level; she is younger (Maddalena Strozzi was only fifteen) and, as such, requires the protection of her husband. But Michelangelo's Mary is by no means weak. Her strength may figuratively allude to the might of the Strozzi family, while also expressing hope for Maddalena's strength in child-bearing. But Mary also forms the solid base of the pyramid, referring perhaps to Maddalena's role of mother and matron of the household.

In order to understand the potential narrative cyclicality tied to Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo*, we must first define temporal circularity, and then, consider the role of the painting within the Doni household in terms of the subject matter. Literary theorist Alfonso de Toro defines temporal circularity in narrative as occurring when analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (flashforward) are used similarly. For example, if from a given point in time (X), we narrate an event which would take place in the future (F1). Subsequently, we proceed to an event that occurred in the past prior to X (P1), and from that point we narrate in a linear fashion all the way through X to reach F1.[228] So how does this formula apply to the *Doni Tondo*? As scholars have shown, we can attribute

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his Vatican *Pietà* as being linked to Dante's verses in *Paradiso* 33.1-6 that recount the prayer of Saint Bernard: "*Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio* ("Virgin mother, daughter of your own Son").

[227] Mirella Levi D'Ancona, "The *Doni Madonna* by Michelangelo: An Iconographic Study," in William Wallace, *Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English: Life and Early Works* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 403-416; see also Regina Stefaniak, *Mysterium Magnum: Michelangelo's Tondo Doni*. (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[228] Alfonso de Toro, "Time Structure in the Contemporary Novel," in *Time: From Concept to Narrative Construct: A Reader*. Jan Christoph Meister, Wilhelm Schernus, eds. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 109-142 (p. 125).

many interpretations to the *Doni Tondo;* it has been explained through complex philosophies and religious doctrine. We must bear in mind that the painting adorned the household of a wealthy merchant—who certainly might have fully understood the deeper significance—but we must also consider his family. How does a father explain this image to his children? He would begin with point X – the present, the Holy Family and the action they are performing. Joseph, the father, seems to be passing the child forward to his wife Mary, who will in turn bear him to us, the spectators. This is symbolic because Christ was brought in to this world to free man from his sins. He will be crucified to save all, and here is our future event: point (F1). No child would be content with this answer and we would expect from them a – "why?" At this point in order to explain the why behind Christ being born in order to die upon the Cross for man's salvation, we must return to a point before Christ, represented by the area behind the low wall (P1). How far back in time one begins depends on the beholder's interpretation of the nude figures. Arriving at St. John the Baptist, one would explain his significance and the connection between two: his own miraculous birth, his heralding the coming of Christ, and performing baptisms. John is the doorway between two worlds, signifying that the first step on the path to salvation is through baptism. We arrive back at the Holy Family. But before returning to the present action, one should explain about Mary and Joseph, the Annunciation, their marriage, the Nativity, the Adorations of the Shepherds and the Magi, the Flight into Egypt—everything that brings us back to the present, back to point X, to the infant Christ being passed forward and delivered to us.

The circular narrative depends on the spatial clarity of the composition and the sculptural integrity and the unity of the Holy Family. The sculptural quality of the figures, the odd angles at which they present themselves to the spectator, enhance their physical presence. We feel as if we could move around them. The dynamism of the composition not only moves back to front, but also in a circular fashion, encouraging the spectator to interact with it on various levels of reading. Mary's elbow breaks the picture plane, connecting the pictorial space to the space of the viewer.

Likewise, the twisted and uncomfortable poses (especially those of Mary and the infant Christ) are bridges, but temporal ones, in their suggestion of action immediately preceding and following. They are literally and figuratively tipping points. The precarious position of the child, perched above his mother's shoulder, is ambiguous; is he moving forward or backward? The ambiguity seen in the teetering and transitory positions of Michelangelo's figures encourages our circular reading of the image. We transition fluidly between past, present and future.

The *Taddei Tondo*, sculpted between 1504-06, (Figure 174) is a marble relief depicting a Madonna and Child with the young St. John. It also presents the viewer with a similar tipping point, wherein the action in course leaves us on the verge of other actions yet to be determined. Like the *Doni Tondo*, the *Taddei Tondo* offers a glimpse into the private life of the Holy Family, although we are minus Joseph. The *Taddei Tondo* offers an even a greater sense of intimacy, of hearth and home and the role of motherhood.

His handling of the subject is far removed from conventional Madonnas that are positioned frontally, as if sitting for a portrait. Mary, in fact, takes no notice of us; we appear to be spying on her. Her attention is focused on the object held gently in John's hands: a bird, probably a goldfinch, due to its symbolic implications. She smiles serenely at the young boy who willingly shares his find. In stark contrast to this quiet moment is the sudden bolt of the Christ child. Suddenly frightened by the flapping wings of the little bird, the child instinctively flees toward the protection of his mother. But here, the action stalls. What happens next is entirely determined by the viewer's interpretation of the significance and the duration of Christ's circumspective glance backward. He moves simultaneously in both directions, as if body and mind were in conflict with one another. His arms and left leg are already over the hurdle of Mary's leg—a barrier that provides sanctuary—while his right leg as well as his attention linger behind. As spectators, we are left swaying between two, perhaps more, possibilities. Will the child hurriedly and clumsily clamber up onto his mother's lap, or will his curiosity and rationality get the best of him? Will he go back, apprehensive yet intrigued? Maybe he'll continue to charge forward to hide behind Mary, only looking back once he has reached a safe distance.

In a sculpted work like the *Taddei Tondo* there is an additional level of viewer interaction found in our ability to explore its physical three-dimensional form. In the *Doni Tondo* such dimensionality was only implied through the sculptural imitation of form in the figures. The ability to examine the sculpture from different angles offers alternate perspectives that have the potential to shape or influence our understanding and interpretation of the narrative. Positioning ourselves to the left of the relief (Figure 175),

we can appreciate how the narrative seems to change quite noticeably. From this angle we can see Christ's face more frontally (Figure 176). The expression seems less fearful and more tired; rather than trying to flee he appears to have just awoken from a nap. Mary's lap appear broader from this angle and more able to accommodate her son. We can imagine him having just been stretched out across Mary's lap, with his head alongside his outstretched arm. Moreover, from this angle his right arm appears to be pushing off from his mother's wrist in order to raise his torso to see what John is holding. From this vantage point the narrative has yet to unfold; the moment it suggests appears to be prior to the moment seen from the frontal view.

Viewed from the right side of the relief (Figure 177), we notice that the depth of the relief appears much shallower. From this angle, Christ flees once again. His right hip and thigh appear heavier and seem to be clearing the hurdle of Mary's leg through the momentum of his motion. The right hand appears to grab Mary's wrist and almost pull rather than push; we can note how the tips of his finger curl inward (Figure 178). St. John and the bird, although barely more than roughed out, are most visible from this angle. On the other hand, Mary, whose face is now in a *profil perdu*, does not appear to be looking down at John and the bird but rather averts her glance away from them to the right.

As spectators, even a minor shift in our viewing angle can transform the image. The various levels of finish, whether intentional or not, also affect the order of our reading. Initially, our eye gravitates to the areas of high finish: the more fully rendered body of Christ, the folds in Mary's bodice and her head. The direction of Mary's and Jesus' glances leads our eye to the less finished figure of John, and eventually to the bird

in his hands. The chronology of the story it tells, however, places John's action first, catching the bird, bringing it to show the others. Mary looks with quiet serenity and Jesus with distrust, fear, wariness: however we might choose to interpret it. Even in this non-narrative subject, Michelangelo has created a very vibrant and detailed narrative that can be read, like the *Doni Tondo,* in a variety of temporal directions but also on various levels of symbolic interpretation. For example, considering the goldfinch as a symbol of the Crucifixion, the expressions and movements of the figures could potentially propose entirely different levels of significance.

The level of narrative power in a scene such as that of the *Taddei Tondo* is noticeable when placed alongside fairly contemporary *Pitti Tondo* (Figure 179). The *Pitti Tondo,* which also depicts Mary with Jesus and St. John, does not imply the same sensation of narrative. Though the figures are closely united within the composition, they do not exhibit the same interconnectivity between them that one experiences in the Doni and Taddei tondos. Mary, who reminds us of Michelangelo's Delphic Sibyl in the Sistine ceiling, looks off into the distance; only her arm is wrapped around Christ. The Christ child leans against his mother, propped up his elbow, which rests on the book in Mary's lap. His head resting against his hand, and eyes looking down, he smiles. John appears as over the shoulder of Mary. He gazes upon Mother and Child with an expression that is not the adoring gaze of the *Doni Tondo* but is more worrisome. The disconnectedness of these three figures, therefore, does not suggest an immediately apparent narrative

Certainly, the lack of action in a work like the *Pitti Tondo* is a major contributing factor to its non-narrativity. The action of the *Doni Tondo* was contained within the interwoven knot of the family unit, and in their unstable poses that suggest the inevitability of imminent change. The central group of the Holy Family was however only a part of a much more complex narrative, laid out with spatial linearity and spanning an extended timeline. The *Taddei Tondo* exhibits a sudden reaction to an action, which in turn sparks further actions, similar to the action in the *Battle of Cascina*. What sets the *Taddei Tondo* apart from these painted works is that the spectator's viewing angle becomes an important factor in enabling the various temporal readings that the work makes possible and which together define its polynarrativity.

Bacchus and *David*: coming full circle

On the terrace of Pride, Dante, with whom Michelangelo was very familiar, taught us that the viewer must sometime take an active role in physically positioning themselves around a work of art in order to read and understand it more clearly:

Per ch'i' mi mossi col viso, e vedea *di retro da Maria, da quella costa* *onde m'era colui che mi movea,* *un'altra storia ne la roccia imposta;* *per ch'io varcai Virgilio, e fe'mi presso,* *acciò che fosse a li occhi miei disposta.*	At that I turned my face and, looking beyond Mary, saw, on the same side as he that prompted me, another story set into the rock. I went past Virgil and drew near so that my eyes might better take it in.[229]
I' mossi i piè del loco dov' io stava per *avvisar da presso un'altra istoria,*	I moved some steps from where I stood to look more closely at another story[230]

[229] Dante, *Purgatorio*10. 49-54
[230] Dante, *Purgatorio*10. 70-71

Dante's movement and repositioning could equally be a metaphor for the mental process of reading on different literal and allegorical levels, but here he is very careful to describe the movement in actual physical terms. It is not enough to move one's head; in order to see it well, to see it more clearly and understand it more completely, the vantage point must be considered. Michelangelo's sculpture often depicts a state of transition that, in and of itself, tells a story, but to fully appreciate the narrative his viewer must also transition. Two statues, carved in the round, the *Bacchus* and the *David,* illustrate the way that Michelangelo's monumental works lend themselves to an experiential reading that admits the possibility of different temporal moments, sequences and tipping points when viewed from various angles.

The *Bacchus* (1496-97) was one of Michelangelo's first large-scale, free-standing statues. It undoubtedly draws some inspiration from the ancient Greek and Roman examples of the subject, but there are qualities about Michelangelo's *Bacchus* that are entirely modern. One such novelty is that Michelangelo conceived it with the intent that it be viewed from all angles. The entirety of the work cannot be appreciated from only one viewing angle. Certain details such as the faun eating grapes and the animal skin can neither be seen nor understood from only a traditional frontal view, as was the customary viewing angle for most ancient statuary. A drawing by Flemish artist Maarten van Heemskerck, ca. 1533–6, depicts Michelangelo's *Bacchus* in the sculpture garden of his patron Jacopo Galli (Figure 180), surrounded by ancient fragments of scultpture and architecture. The drawing shows that the Bacchus was not placed in a niche, or flush

against a wall. Although there is a wall nearby, there is ample room to move around the statue and see it from all sides.

The spiraling movement of Michelangelo's *Bacchus* compels the spectator to circumnavigate the composition and consider the journey around it as an entire viewing process. Since there is no specific source text to which it relates, the Bacchus does not represent a narrative in the traditional sense of the word. In the time it takes to journey around the statue, we witness Bacchus' evolution—or transformation—from a state of sobriety to a state of rapture and back again, in an unending cycle. Because the *Bacchus* does not have only one predetermined viewing angle, it is the one work by Michelangelo that has been considered by others, to some extent, for it narrative content and temporal development.[231] In fact, Ralph Lieberman notes:

> [As we] walk around the figure, we become aware of the temporal aspect of the work, for Bacchus appears in a constant transition from a stable pose to an unstable one and back again, losing his balance momentarily and then regaining it.[232]

From an entirely frontal view (Figure 181), the *contrapposto* of Bacchus seems unbalanced; the shoulders are not square, the head is tilted forward and at an angle, and the cup (a modern replacement) appears as though it could tumble from his hand at any minute. It is clear that Bacchus is quite literally at his tipping point. Seen from a frontal view he succeeds in maintaining a relatively erect posture, though not without a great

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[231] Ralph Lieberman, "Regarding Michelangelo's Bacchus," *Artibus et historiae* 43 (2001), 65-74; see also Douglas Biow, *In your Face: Professional Improprieties and The Art of Being Conspicuous in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 101-122. In particular, the author discusses the conspicuous performative aspect of the *Bacchus*, in terms of how it presents itself, how it was meant to be seen its theatrical setting (the garden of Jacopo Galli), and in its brazen departures from classical antiquity.

[232] Lieberman, 72.

deal of effort. The pointed pedestal that cuts back toward the right, coupled with the angular silhouette of Bacchus' proper left side, and in particular his left shoulder, angled down and away from the viewer, tip Bacchus slightly to the right. That downward and backward motion help to signal the viewer to move around him in a counter-clockwise direction.

Only a few steps to the right are necessary to see the Bacchus suddenly begin to reel and lose his balance. Seen from roughly a forty-five degree angle (Figure 182), the axis is suddenly thrown of off-kilter. From the waist down, Bacchus' entire body appears to stumble forward as the knee juts out awkwardly. It seems a wonder that he manages to stand at all. From this angle we can also appreciate the odd twist of the shoulders as it appears that the upper half of his body is about to swing forward to regain equilibrium. From this angle, we can also begin to see the mischievous face of the faun who is hiding behind his arm, so we continue moving to the right to see him better.[233]

The left profile view (Figure 183) allows the viewer to appreciate the reverse S-curve of the young God of wine, which is countered with the opposing spiraling twist of the faun. They act almost like a double helix, twisting around one another. From behind (Figure 184 & Figure 185), the Bacchus begins to regain a more upright posture and sense of sobriety. This impression of regained senses continues as we round the statue to the right-side profile and right-side forty-five degree angle (Figure 186). From these vantage points the Bacchus appears to have sobered once again. This is partially due to

[233] For a comprehensive journey around the Bacchus, see Ralph Lieberman, 65-74.

the fact that, from these angles, his posture is more stable and erect, and the unfocused expression of his face (Figure 187) is blocked by the cup (a later addition).

In order to better understand and visualize the stark contrast of the modernity of Michelangelo's *Bacchus,* I will briefly compare him to an ancient Dionysus that shares a strikingly similar composition. This second-century AD Dionysus (Figure 188) belonged to the collection of the Marchese Campana in Rome until its sale in 1861.[234] The Campana *Dionysus* shares an almost identical pose with Michelangelo's *Bacchus*. It stands in contrapposto with the weight on the left leg, the left arms hangs by his side, holding a bunch of grapes, and his left leg is supported by a trunk. The faun and the animal skin are missing, but both statues hold a cup aloft in their right hand, and their heads are crowned with grapes and vines. There are so many similarities that one wonders whether or not Michelangelo may have seen this ancient statue. Further research of the Campana collection might provide a clue as to its provenance, and to whether it was visible in a Roman collection at the turn of the sixteenth century, long before it was acquired by the Campana family in the nineteenth century.

The Campana *Dionysus* does not exhibit the same state of intoxication of Michelangelo's stumbling fellow. The posture is much more erect, the head straight, the expression serene, and the eyes focused. There is none of the swaying and swivel in the

[234] The Marquis Giovanni Pietro Campana (1808-1880) came from a family that was charged with managing the Monte di Pieta`, a charitable organization instituted by the Vatican, which was essentially a pawnbrokerage. Campana, who developed a passion for archeology, had amassed one of the most representative collections in Europe. His collection consisted of bronze and marble sculptures, terracotta works, jewelry, ceramics and coins from antiquity, but also Renaissance sculptures and majolica. An overly-zealous collector, the Marquis ended up in running himself into financial ruin. The bulk of his collection was purchased at auction by the Hermitage in St. Petersburg in 1861.

hips or the shoulders. The position of the knee is regular. Side by side profiles of the two statues (Figure 189) show this effect even better; the ancient statue maintains its axis and posture. It lacks, however, that spark of life that Michelangelo's *Bacchus* exudes. We do not feel compelled to walk around it; there is no mystery concerning the focus of his gaze. Michelangelo's *Bacchus* requires almost a sense of complicity on behalf of the viewer; we must laugh along with him, or raise a glass. The crude, and even grotesque, expressionistic qualities of Michelangelo's *Bacchus* are what make him so true to life. The qualities that most likely discouraged Cardinal Riario (the statue's original patron) from appreciating the *Bacchus*, are precisely what make it so special, and so quintessentially modern.

The *Bacchus* exemplifies a certain sense of humor among the work of Michelangelo. Although it is a subject whose actions are not taken from any particular narrative, the artist has presented us with an honest portrait of the god of wine. Whether we have experienced such inebriation or have simply witnessed it, we can empathize with his genuine expressions of drunkenness. The old adage holds true: *in vino veritas*. As we walk around Bacchus, we identify with his stumbling and reeling motion and his unfocused gaze. Not only do we witness the process of inebriation, we also experience it. The temporality of the event is built in to our rotation around him and, bit by bit, the rotation reveals his story to us as we witness his transformation. The *David* in a very similar way reveals himself to us as we move around him, but the action is manifested differently, not as openly as in the *Bacchus*. The story of David and Goliath is very well

known, but Michelangelo's *David* tells a part of the story that hasn't been told before: a part of the story that can only be told by the main character.

The Old Testament narrative of the underdog David defeating the Philistine giant, Goliath (1 Samuel 17), was a very popular story. In the fiercely independent state of Florence, it was particularly cherished and was the subject of many paintings and statues. The marvelous bronze and marble *Davids* of Donatello and Verrocchio, which had been privately commissioned, are veritable hallmarks of Florentine Quattrocento sculpture. But it was Michelangelo's groundbreaking colossus, and its placement as sentry at the entrance to the Palazzo della Signoria, that confirmed David as also a symbol of Florentine civic life. The sheer magnitude and physical beauty of Michelangelo's *David* are certainly enough to leave a lasting impression. However, its most innovative quality is found in its composition, and in the artist's choice of depicting a pre-battle moment. Unlike his triumphant cousins, who proudly display the severed head of Philistine giant, the victory of Michelangelo's *David* over his opponent has yet to be written.

Michelangelo's *David* interprets a moment of the narrative that the artist has imagined, as it is not a moment that exists—or, at least, it is not explicitly described—in the biblical narrative. In fact, the mood captured in Michelangelo's David is rather unlike anything in the Old Testament narrative. There is no mention of this quieter, yet tension-filled, moment before the battle. Michelangelo's *David* is nothing like the rather cheeky David in 1 Samuel 17. The character David of the biblical story is brazen, and even a bit of a braggart:

> **34** But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, **35** I went after it, struck it and

> rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. [36] Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. [37] The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.

Even when faced Goliath's taunts and 'trash-talk', the impertinent and juvenile David of the written narrative, responds in kind, fully confident in his righteous virtue:

> [41] Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. [42] He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. [43] He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. [44] "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!"
> [45] David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. [46] This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. [47] All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

From the biblical text, there is the clear sense of David's youth, of his unadulterated adolescent trust and blind faith in God. To the more skeptical or cautious, such qualities may appear a sign of naiveté or a lack of good judgment. The young David of the Bible has the confidence that his victory is guaranteed by his conviction and faith in Divine Providence. He is a vessel through which God will defeat the evil and as such, he is not plagued by apprehensions or doubt. This sort of swagger is recognizable in the nimble build, jocular attitude and exuberant confidence of Verrocchio's bronze *David* (Figure 190) ca. 1468, or Donatello's 1409 marble *David* (Figure 191).

Both figures stand tall with their heads high, in confident postures: left hand at the hip, left foot behind the severed head of Goliath, right foot flanking the other side of the

head. Verrocchio's sprightly teen exudes a sense of self-assuredness. His smiling face, proud stance, and firm grasp of the sword belies his slight, yet agile, frame. The lively eyes and unruly curls give him an appearance that is mischievous, almost Peter Pan-like. The spectator has no trouble imagining this fellow taunting the giant. Donatello's marble *David* also conveys confidence, but of a more sophisticated nature. His elongated limbs, elegant hands and swanlike neck—not to mention the flow and fit of his garments—recall the International Gothic style, and they exemplify a more courtly nature. His posture is not quite as erect as Verrocchio's *David*, but somewhat more relaxed, even debonair. Likewise, his face is serene and self-assured, almost nonchalant.

Donatello's bronze *David* (Figure 192-Figure 193) is not exactly the active David that one imagines from the Biblical narrative. A striking innovation is certainly his nudity. The text narrative specifically mentions the fact that David refused to wear the armor and helmet offered by Saul, because they were cumbersome and restricting. It does not mention that he faced his opponent in the buff. Donatello's choice was most likely linked to the classical revival, and in imitation of the ancient statues of sensual youths that were coveted by the wealthy collectors of antiquities. This David, like his counterparts, stands triumphantly over the head of Goliath, but his body is not as athletic, and he does not exude the same feeling of youthful invincibility. This youth is softer and somewhat effeminate, and even erotic. He is more credible if we interpret him as the meek, yet faithful, servant of God. He is the vehicle through which the creator wields his will: a notion underscored by Goliath's massive sword, which is much too heavy for this young hero's frame.

In keeping with iconographic tradition, he is shown victorious, but his body language does not imply the pleasure or the self-celebratory glory of victory. The outcome of the battle has caused what could be interpreted as a bittersweet reflection. The wide-brim of his fanciful hat, casts his face into shadow, perhaps alluding to shadowed thoughts. His manner suggests introspection; David's lips are slightly parted, and his downcast gaze is fixed—in a rather unfocused but thought-filled manner—on an indefinite spot in front of him, not on the severed head of his victim. It is possible that he is contemplating the headless body of Goliath, or perhaps he is standing in reverence in front of King Solomon. Is he internalizing the consequences of his actions: feeling remorse for having taken a life? Whatever Donatello's David is experiencing, it is silent; his introspective demeanor invites the viewer's speculation and contemplation as to its meaning.

Michelangelo, too, offers his viewer a glimpse into the mind of his interpretation of David. Compared to Donatello's bronze, the two works are virtually polar opposites in terms of scale, medium, physique, and the narrative moments they represent. They do share commonalities in their imitation of classical models and in their celebration of the male nude, but it is also their expressiveness that draws the viewer in to explore the inner psyche of their figures.

By presenting the viewer with a pre-battle scene, Michelangelo presents us with a David who is neither enjoying the moment of triumph, nor physically engaged in a pivotal moment of battle, such as can be seen in his fresco in the Sistine Chapel, or in Bernini's energetic and dramatic Baroque *David*. By depicting a moment before the

encounter, he has left a certain temporal ambiguity concerning the event that invites the viewer to explore and ponder his or her own narrative possibilities.

The *David* cannot be fully appreciated without having the ability to move around it. To no small degree, the viewer's reading of the *David* is made possible by the statue's accessibility. The positioning of the *David,* upon its pedestal in Piazza della Signoria, and now in the Galleria dell'Accademia, has allowed for a more intimate interaction between the statue and its audience.[235] The viewing experience, and therefore the spectator's ability move around the statue and to closely inspect the details and—we might say—read his body language, is inextricably tied to the possibility of viewing it from several possible angles.

In the meeting held on January 25, 1504, a group of Florentine citizens (many of whom artists) met to discuss the best location for the statue. Among the sites suggested were the west façade of the Duomo, various positions in and around the Signoria square (under the Loggia dei Lanzi, in the square, in front or in the courtyard of the Palazzo della Signoria). In his study of the minutes taken at the meeting, Saul Levine notes that the committee was concerned not only with the political implications of the statue and how its menacing expression and its location would affect its interpretation. He also notes the preoccupation with being able to properly see the statue.[236] Levine understands the comments of the men concerned with logistical obstructions and restrictions (for example, shadows, and viewing angles blocked by columns under the Loggia, or too

[235] For a study of the various locations proposed for the statue of David and the minutes of the meeting to decide the locations, see. Saul Levine, "The Location of Michelangelo's 'David'" in: William E. Wallace, *Michelangelo Selected Scholarship in English*, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1995), vol. I, 290-309.
[236] Levine, p 299.

much distraction from other statues of the façade of the Duomo) to imply that "the front of the David was not considered to be its exclusive or primary view."[237] A musician, Giovanni *piffero* (the fife-player) had one of the most enlightened concerns. He was worried about being able to see the statue in its entirety ("*se si vedessa tutta*" [sic]) but in order to do so, he says, one must think of the purpose ("*pensare alla ragione"*) of the statue (i.e. its meaning, the political implications) and the need to avoid any obstacles so that the viewer may see the statue unobstructed, and have the ability to move around the statue to see it from all sides ("*bisognia andarle intorno*").[238] Giovanni's remarks linking the statue's meaning to the spectator's ability to move around it freely work to the advantage of better understanding the statue through the experience of seeing it from various angles.[239] Like the *Bacchus*, David's appearance and indeed his expression, change depending on the viewing angle of the spectator.

In the piazza where the *David* stood (now replaced by the copy), there are several angles of approach (Figure 194). Entering the square from the north-west corner, either from the main access of via dei Calzaiuoli, or from via Calimaruzza, one approaches the statue from David's proper right at about a 45 degree angle (Figure 195). From this vantage point we see the solidity of the plumb axis of David's weight-bearing leg, the

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[237] Levine, p. 299.

[238] Levine, p. 299.

[239] Regarding further the decision of the location, the artists, Piero di Cosimo, Filippino Lippi suggest that any final decision be left to the discretion of Michelangelo since he knew the statue more intimately and had considered its location throughout the process of creating it ("*che se ne ne achordi quello che l'a fact ache lui sa meglio come vuole stare*." [Piero di Cosimo] "*credo che el maestro habia meglio e piu lungamente pensato el luogo*" [Lippi]). Levine demonstrates through his reading of the minutes that there are strong indications among the words of the men that the location, either for the Palazzo or somewhere in the Signoria square, had already be discussed long before this meeting, and perhaps as early as 1501. In fact, Francesco Monciatto's statement in which he attests to the fact that the place (destination) of the statue has been changed from the original plan of placement at or near the Duomo ("*e mutato loco*" and "*poiche voi siate levato dal primo obiecto*"). pp. 303-304.

verticality of which is reinforced by the length of the right arm that hangs by his side and the upright stump supporting his leg. From this direction David's head is seen in *profil perdu*, looking toward the Arno. The bend in his left knee and wrist, and the placement of his left foot, also point us in that direction. Entering the piazza from the north (via delle Farine /via dei Cerchi) afforded a direct view in line with the *ringhiera* (the raised platform that ran along the west façade of Palazzo della Signoria), and therefore, a profile view of David's right side. This is the thinnest and perhaps most anatomically awkward view, but is also less informative because his body and attention are focused away from this side. Today in fact, this vantage point is obstructed by Giambologna's equestrian statue of Cosimo I, and by the "Biancone," Bartolommeo Ammannati's *Neptune*. Coming from the Ponte Vecchio and via Por Santa Maria, one enters the square by way of the southwestern entrance of via Vaccareccia. From this direction the viewer has a direct frontal approach to the statue (Figure 196). This is the vantage point of approach that we have today visiting the statue at the Galleria dell'Accademia, which will be discussed momentarily. Arriving from the south, from the direction of the river (today this view is mostly obscured by Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus*), we are confronted by David's left profile (Figure 197) , yet we are not in a direct line of his menacing stare which is aimed more toward the Ponte Vecchio.

Because David is placed at the end of a long corridor, under a glass rotunda in the Accademia, the visitor's direct angle of approach from the opposite end of the corridor is predetermined. Seen from the front (Figure 198), the statue, as Saul Levine has noted, exhibits its most heroic and "Herculean stance, embodying strength and a powerful

defensive capacity."[240] From this vantage point, and as we approach the statue, the viewer can best appreciate David's athletic build: broad shoulders, narrow hips, his naturalistic musculature, and his relaxed *contrapposto* pose. As the spectator draws closer, they begin to see details like the veins in his neck and upper arm that seem to pulse with latent energy. David's head is turned almost in profile (Figure 199) as he gazes off to his left. The tendons in his powerful neck are taut, and the oblique angle of his profile, exposes David's high cheekbone and set jaw. We also begin to gain a sense of the intensity of his fixed gaze, made even more powerful by the 'rocky' profile of his furrowed brow.

The direction of David's attention, as well as the lines created by the angles of his left arm and knee, point us to the right. Thus, our natural inclination is to move around the statue in a counterclockwise manner. In doing so, we see David's expression transform. As we move around the *David* (Figure 200), from about forty-five degrees, viewing his face frontally, we see the concentration of his stare. The great mass of curls that frame his face, the heavy brow and the deep cuts that form the creases of his eyelids cast shadows that contour the topography of his face and add to the intensity of his gaze. The pursed lips, and flared nostrils add to his expression of vigilance. A few more steps to the right and we can better see the dark cavity of his ear which suggests he is listening intently for the first signs of the enemy. If we move a few steps in from this position, under David's elbow and look up (Figure 201), the expression is different still; it seems

[240] Levine, 290-309.

to express worry. The flare of the nostrils is more pronounced, the eyes appear larger and more apprehensive.

The direct rear view of the statue, while anatomically impressive, is not one of the more relevant angles. Rounding the statue to the right profile, we catch a glimpse of the rock, held in David's hand (Figure 202). David's massive right hand conveys certain information to the viewer. First of all, it establishes the fact that this David has not yet faced Goliath, and therefore he is depicted before battle. This is the more powerful and assured weight-bearing side of David. The fact that his hand holds the stone loosely and does not grip it tightly, implies a sense of confidence. The prominent vein on the back of his hand (Figure 203) that appears to course with blood suggests the hand's potential (to quote Michelangelo's famous sonnet) to do what the intellect commands (note that the vein continues up the arm and through the neck).

A vantage point that Michelangelo was no doubt very familiar with, but may have never imagined for his own audience, is the eye-level view of David's face. Once we are on par with the 'Giant' at eye-level (Figure 204 &Figure 205), the viewing angle conveys a much keener sense of trepidation or concern or, as noted by Hibbard, a self-referential reflection of the artist's own "troubled ambition."[241] The eyes appear very large; they almost twitch nervously in the heavy lids that surround them. The brow is contracted as tightly as possible. The dilator muscles in the nose pull the nostrils upward and outward, showing them flared at the maximum extension. The chin and the mouth appear small, and the lips seem parted ever so slightly, as if he were drawing breath from them as well.

[241] Hibbard, 61

His facial expression betrays a state of self-questioning, of apprehension mixed with determination.

In the biblical account, at this point in the narrative, David has already encountered Goliath, and they have exchanged insults and taunts. The battle is already in course when David goes to retrieve his sling:

> As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.[242]

The action of the text is explosive. The David of the biblical narrative already knows what to do and he acts on instinct. Michelangelo's David is conceived outside of the textual tradition. He is imagined to be awaiting his opponent, expecting him, thinking about what he will do, and perhaps even visualizing his plan of attack. The action is internal, racing within his mind, yet conveyed through the expressiveness of his face, which, depending on the viewing angle, encompasses a variety of emotions. At first approach he appears invincible and calm. Moving around him, his gaze and concentration becomes tense, the nostrils and eyes widen and the look is more one of apprehension; does he see the opponent? But then we return to the solidity and the power of the right hand. Michelangelo's David does not appear a vehicle of God's will, but a human being, faced with an incredible challenge. Despite the fact that his outward stance may seem formidable and unshakeable, his range of emotions invite the viewer in to imagine the psychological battle playing out within David's mind as he waits indefinitely, previewing the battle to come.

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[242] 1 Saul 17:48-49

In the early works of Michelangelo discussed thus far, we have seen how the factor of time can be expressed through spatial composition by the transiency that figural contortion presents, by way of depicted or implied action, and through the variety of expressions displayed by many, a few or even a single figure. Time and change within his works is also interpreted through the role of the spectator, by viewing the sculpture as a process from many vantage points.

The New Sacristy: time and memory

Conceived together as a whole, the ensemble of the New Sacristy (1520-1534) exhibits a variety of temporal expressions that unfold within of the space of the chapel. It does so through the complexity of the relationships between its figures and their symbolism. Constructed within the Medici's family parish, San Lorenzo, the chapel was built to act as a formal and functional pendant to Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy.[243] The functional purpose, beyond its designation as a sacristy, was that of a private burial chapel for the Medici. The chapel's commission began under the auspices of Pope Leo X and Cardinal Giulio de' Medici to honor their fathers, Lorenzo il Magnifico (father of Giovanni/ Leo X) and his brother Giuliano (murdered during the Pazzi conspiracy 1478, father of Giulio, future pope Clement the VII). It was also to house the tombs of their

[243] See Charles De Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Medici Chapel*, Vol. 3. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943); James Beck, Antonio Paolucci, Bruno Santi, *Michelangelo: The Medici Chapel* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994); William Wallace, *Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English: San Lorenzo*. vol. 3 (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1995); Edith Balas, *Michelangelo's Medici Chapel: A New Interpretation*, Volume 216 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995). Regarding more specifically the architecture of the chapel see James Ackerman, *The Architecture of Michelangelo*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986); Giulio Carlo Argan, *Michelangelo: Architect* (Milano: Electa, 2004).

recently deceased relations: Giovanni's younger brother, Giuliano, Duke of Nemours (the youngest son of Lorenzo il Magnifico; he was named after his murdered uncle, and died in 1516) and Giovanni's nephew, Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino (grandson of Lorenzo il Magnifico, who died in 1519, leaving behind his infant daughter Catherine, future queen of France). Their monuments would join those of their ancestors in Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy and in the nave of San Lorenzo. These include: the sarcophagus of Giovanni di Bicci and his wife Piccarda carved by Buggiano on Donatello's design (1429-ca. 1433); the double tomb of Piero il Gottoso and his brother Giovanni by Verrocchio (1478); and the tomb marker of the *Pater Patriae*, Cosimo il Vecchio, designed by Donatello.

Michelangelo must have felt a great sense of pride in being entrusted with such a commission to honor il Magnifico, the man who had recognized his talent as a young artist, and who had provided him with education and opportunity. But he must have also felt the prospect and responsibility of being added to the ranks of such an illustrious cast of Florentine architects and sculptors. Much like Dante must have felt when, in Limbo, he finds himself in the company of Homer, Horace, Ovid, Lucan and Virgil and declares that he was made "*sesto tra contanto senno*" (sixth among such wisdom), Michelangelo was quite literally in the company of his artistic forbears and challenged with making his contribution.[244] Like the lineage of the great men that he would honor in his chapel, Michelangelo was also honoring the artistic lineage of his predecessors, while leaving his own indelible mark on history.

[244] Dante, *Inferno*, 4.102

Because they are markers that indicate a person's death but continue to propagate the commemoration of their identity, funerary monuments are inherently predicated on the passage of time and the persistence of memory. Time is the over-arching theme of the decorative program of the New Sacristy (Figure 206). On the surface, Michelangelo's tombs symbolize the infinite march and the all-consuming nature of time, while they continue to perpetuate the identity and the fame of their occupants, and in this case, also of the artist who created them.[245] The decorative program has been interpreted and read on many levels to propose various allegorical, religious, philosophic and dynastic messages.[246]

Four figures representing the four times of day (*Dawn, Day, Dusk* and *Night*) symbolize the continuous cycle that is time. These adorn the sarcophagi of the more recently deceased *capitani,* located on the side walls of the sacristy. Condivi describes the symbolism of time in the decoration as such:

> The sarcophagi are placed against the side walls, and along their lids stretch two great figures larger than life-size, namely a man and a woman, by which are signified separately Day and Night and, both together, Time that consumes everything. […] he left on the work a piece of the marble for the mouse he wished to make (bet never did, as

[245] It should be noted that Condivi also credits the memory of the patron of the New Sacristy, Clement VII touting it as the only laudable act that the Medici pope did in his lifetime: one that could erase all of his other defects. "*Questo beneficio doviamo à Papa Clemente, il quale se nesun'altra cosa di lodevole in vita fatta havesse, che pur ne fece molte, questa fu bastante à scancelare ogni suo difetto, che per lui il mondo ha cosi nobil'opera*." Condivi, *Vita di Michelangelo*

[246] For a reading of the Sacristy as an abstract imitation of a crypt and the journey of the souls to salvation, see Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo* (Princeton, 1948), 63-75. For a reading of the Neoplatonic symbolism of the Sacristy see Erwin Panofsky, "The Neo-Platonic Movement and Michelangelo," in *Studies in Iconology* (New York: Harper and Row, Icon Editions, 1972) and more recently Edith Balas, *Michelangelo's Medici Chapel: A New Interpretation*, 1995, Volume 216. For an interpretation concerning the glorification of the Medici dynasty and their connection with the Church see Frederick Hartt, "The Meaning of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel," in William Wallace, *Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English: San Lorenzo.* vol. 3 (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 57–67; Creighton Gilbert, "Texts and Contexts on the Medici Chapel" *The Art Quarterly*. Vol. 34 no. 4 (April 1971), 391-407. Gilbert's study explores the literary references behind Michelangelo's decorative program for the chapel.

he was prevented) since the little creature is continually gnawing and consuming, just as time is continually devouring everything.[247]

The identification of the figures of Day and Night seems to be found, not only in Condivi, but even earlier, in Michelangelo's own bit of prose written on a page of drawings for architectural moldings for the chapel, in which the two figures speak:

El Dì e la Nocte parlano, e dichono: *Noi abbiàno chol nostro veloce chorso cond[o]cto alla morte el ducha Giul[i]ano; è ben g[i]usto che e' ne facci vendecta chome fa. E la vendecta è questa, che avendo noi morto lui, lui chosì mort[o] á ctolta la luce a nnoi e chogli occhi chiusi á serrato e' nostri, che non risplendon più soppra la terra. Che arrebbe di noi dunche facto, mentre vivea?*	Day and Night speak, and say: We with our swift course have conducted Duke Giuliano to his death; and it is just that he have his revenge on us as he does. And the revenge is this: that we having killed him, he now dead, has robbed us of light, and with his eyes closed has sealed ours shut to no longer shine on earth. What would he have done with us had he lived?

The text asks us to imagine the possibilities of what Giuliano might have accomplished on Earth had he not been taken before his time, if his narrative had not been cut short by the rapid succession of day and night that ended his life prematurely. Since all of the men honored in the New Sacristy died before their time, the inscription above could easily be read as valid for any of these illustrious Medici, *capitani* or *magnifici*. In fact, the tombs are not marked by any labeling or epitaph, making them somewhat more universal. Giuliano il Magnifico's death by murder at age 25, was the most tragic and shocking. Lorenzo Duke of Urbino died of syphilis and battle wounds at age 28; Giuliano Duke of Nemours died at the age of 37 and Lorenzo il Magnifico at the age of 43. To put it into perspective for Michelangelo, at the time the work began on the

[247] *L'Arche son poste dentro à certe cappelle, sopra i coperchi delle quali, iaceno due figurone, maggiori del naturale, cioè un'homo e una donna, significandosi per queste il giorno et la notte, et per ambi due, il tempo che consuma il tutto. [...] Et per la significatione del tempo, voleva fare un topo, havendo lasciato in sù l'opera un poco di marmo, il qual poi non fece, impedito, percioche tale an[i]maluccio di continuo rode et consuma, non altrimenti chel tempo, ogni cosa divora.* Condivi, p 36.

construction of the New Sacristy, he had already reached his mid-forties, an age beyond that attained by any of those buried in the tombs.

The entrance wall opposite the altar was designated for the double tomb of the *magnifici,* but it was never brought to completion. Only Michelangelo's *Medici Madonna*, and the Medici patron saints Cosmas and Damian, carved on the artist's own design by Giovanngelo Montorsoli and Raffaello da Montelupo decorate this tomb. Other elements that were planned but never brought to execution were four Rivers or River God figures, which were originally destined to be placed under the times of day, as can be seen in drawings and sculpted models left by the artist. According to Panofsky, the rivers symbolized four rivers of river of Hades, discussed by Plato in the *Phaedra*, but also mentioned by Dante in his journey through the Hell.[248] Tolnay echoes this interpretation of the rivers of the underworld that carry the souls to the afterlife by reading the entire allegorical program as the "delivery of the soul after death."[249] Tolnay also noted that Michelangelo's innovation in depicting the *capitani* as alive signified their life beyond earthly death.

Creighton Gilbert's analysis seeks to understand the symbolism of the chapel through the texts left by the artist. He also considers the sources from which Michelangelo may have drawn his idea for the four times of day, which in his opinion is Dante.[250] The curving trajectory of the arced lids of the sarcophagi, coupled with the two

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[248] Panofsky, *Studies in Inconology*, 204. Panofsky reads the four rivers of Hades in the Neoplatonic key of Landino and Pico, where "they signify the fourfold aspect of matter enslaving the human soul at the moment of birth."

[249] Tolnay, p 40.

[250] Gilbert, "Texts and Contexts", 303-321. Gilbert was by no means the first to connect the symbolism of the chapel to the philosophical interpretations of Dante's writing. Benedetto Varchi mentions Dante in

certain identifications of *Day* and *Night*, suggest Dante's discussion in the *Convivio* concerning the notion that the course of one's life is like that of an arc that rises and falls over four segments:

> Turning again to human life, which is our sole concern at present, I assert then that it resembles this arc, rising and falling again. […] However this arc of life is not characterised in the writings solely by reference to its midpoint, but is divided into four periods, according to the four combinations of contrary qualities that compose us, to each of which combinations one part of our life corresponds, and these are known as the four ages of man. The first is Adolescence, which corresponds to the hot and moist; the second is Maturity which corresponds to the hot and dry; the third is Old Age, which corresponds to the cold and dry; and the fourth is Senility which corresponds to the cold and moist, as Albertus says in his *De aetate*. These periods of life also correspond to the seasons of the year, spring, summer, autumn and winter, and the hours of the day, up to tierce, from tierce to nones (omitting sext, mid-way between, for an obvious reason), nones to vespers, and vespers onward.[251]

Dante's characterization of the four times of day being related to the canonical hours may be related to the four masses for the dead performed daily as well as the seasons of the year, giving further emphasis to the cyclical nature of time.[252] But it also opens up further levels of symbolism. Dante, in fact, mentions the correlation of the four ages of

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relation to Michelangelo's chapel in his *Seconda Lezzione* (1546), in particular within the Third Dispute: "In che siano simili ed in che differenti i Poeti ed i Pittori". Varchi read the decoration of the chapel in the metaphorical key of lines from the *Paradiso*, connecting the four times of day to Dante's interpretation of the cosmos and their eternal cycles. See also Leatrice Mendelsohn, *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's* Due Lezzioni *and Cinquecento Art Theory.* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI research Press, 1982), 140-142.

[251] Dante, *Convivio*, 4.xxiii.

[252] Federick Harrt, "The Meaning of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel," 62. Hartt cites Giovanni Cinelli's *Le Bellezze di Firenze*, who in 1677, reports that, in order to fulfill instructions left by Clement VII, two priests continue to pray throughout the day, and every morning they perform at least four masses. Cinelli's original text: *" egli [Clemente VII] volle, come si osserva inviolabilmente due Sacerdoti ad ogni hora , in ogni tempo facessero orazione per quelle Anime de' vivi, e de' morti, che sono della Casa de' Medici; cioè per quelli, che col sangue di coloro sono congiunti ; quali hanno fondata la Chiesa, o ne sono stati benefattori : e che la mattina poscia per due hore si dicessero messe, almeno quattro , per questo, egli si usa svegliata diligenza, e cura grandissima, perche il tutto, come fu divisato da questo Sommo Pontefice, à pieno sìa fornito."* Further information regarding the liturgical traditions of San Lorenzo are found in, Robert Gaston, "Liturgy and Patronage in San Lorenzo, Florence 1350– 1650" in *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*. F. W. Kent, Patricia Simons, J. C. Eade (eds.) (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1987).

man with the qualities of the soul put forth by ancient philosophers. These additionally relate to the seasons, the elements, the humors, the temperaments, and the characteristics of those temperaments connected with each age, which Dante goes on to explain in Book IV, chapters xxiv-xxviii. Comparing Dante's descriptions of the Ages of Man to Michelangelo's personifications of the times of day, many correlations can be found, and though tempting to discuss in further detail, it falls outside the present discussion of time in the New Sacristy.

Gilbert admits that it may seem a discrepancy that not all four times of day are placed along a single arc, but concludes that Michelangelo probably understood the greater scope being that the four times of day are relating to being "parts of a cosmological whole," and therefore it was not necessary to depict the four times of day individually for each man.[253] Moreover, according to Dante's calculations, none of the men buried in the Sacristy would have made it to the threshold of what was considered Old Age (age forty-five), so in terms of life span seen as a single day, they lived only half a day.

I would argue that Michelangelo's division and placement of the times of day is very deliberate, not only because for each tomb, it divides the figures into complementary characteristics (one male, one female; one rising, one falling, one active, one contemplative) but because it creates a naturally recurring pattern of movement in the room. The movement is not circular, but cyclical. Because the figures are not laid out around the room in a chronological order, if we are to trace them chronologiacally, their

[253] Gilbert, "Texts and Contexts...", 315

order is read through a series of transversals and perpendicular lines. From *Dawn* we look diagonally to *Day;* from *Day* we return straight across the room to *Dusk*; from *Dusk* another transversal crossing to *Night;* and finally from *Night* another direct crossing to return to *Dawn*. Connecting all the dots together (Figure 207), we do not have a circle but almost a figure eight on its side. Though such a symbol may not have had the same significance of infinity that it holds today, it nonetheless creates symbolizes the eternal quality of a circle, but with arcs that rise and fall.[254] This rise and fall is also noted in the curvature of the lids and in the bodies themselves. *Dawn* and *Dusk* (Figure 208) pull or prop their torsos up, the first with fatigue and the second with despondency. The rest of their bodies, save one knee each, slides down the lid of the sarcophagus. *Day* and *Night* (Figure 209), twist and turn in opposing directions, creating jagged silhouettes. In each pair there is a diurnal and a nocturnal figure: one figure is in an awakened or wakening state while the other is winding down or sleeping.

The cyclicality of time can be read not only in the rising and falling of the four figured times of day, but also in the architecture itself. The entire chapel is a juxtaposition of dark and light that mimics the continuous rhythm of night following day: as can be seen in the alternating *pietra serena* and white marble, as well as the light and shadow formed in the coffered dome (Figure 210). There is also the linear repetition of the decorative details: the egg-and-dart design and the frieze of masks (Figure 211). These display a repeating pattern, but one that is not merely a precise and identical

[254] The two diagonal lines also form an "X" or a cross in the very center of the room (perhaps a symbolic crucifix).

mechanical sequence; each mask is slightly different from the next. Like the chain of days in the life of an individual, no two are ever the same.

Adding to the system of binary functions is also the active and contemplative. These are best personified by the active and alert *Giuliano* (Figure 212) and the brooding and pensive *Lorenzo* (Figure 213). Giuliano's stance is open: he sits forward on his seat, shoulders back, a twist in the torso in the direction of the altar. His idealized head turns sharply to his left on an elegant swan-like neck, and looks toward the original entrance door to the Sacristy.[255] Dressed in Roman armor and with a baton of command in hand, he is the personification of active—and even civic—life. Lorenzo is depicted as his opposite; though he is also dressed in armor, his posture is closed in upon itself. His face is shadowed by his helmet and his hand props up his chin in a typical thinker's pose. He looks toward the Madonna on the end wall. Under his elbow is a money box with a bat-like mask. The active and the contemplative have their counterparts also in the times of day: both *Night* and *Dusk* are figures that represent a contemplative or dream state. *Dawn* and *Day* on the other hand represent the active. Dawn is in the process of rising, though she appears reluctant. The figure of Day, though closed in on himself, is very active; he twists and turns, moving simultaneously in two directions.

If Michelangelo was using Dante as a source—Gilbert discusses how, in Donato Giannotti's *Dialogue*, Michelangelo proves his knowledge of Dante's conception of time in the *Divine Comedy*—he certainly would have been familiar with the theme of *vita*

[255] Gilbert, "Texts and Contexts..." 313-14.

activa and *vita contemplativa* as Dante used it in the Purgatory.[256] It should be noted that Purgatory, which is most similar to Earth, is the only realm where time is relevant. Hell is filled with eternal damnation and Paradise, eternal salvation, they are both beyond time because they are absolutes. Purgatory, on the other hand is a place of change; every day, through atonement, the souls get a little closer to their goal of purgation and salvation. Soon after arriving in Purgatory, in Canto 7, Dante encounters his friend Sordello. It is dusk and Sordello explains that the physical journeying is done for the day:

Ma vedi già come dichina il giorno,	But see, already day is waning
e andar sù di notte non si puote;	and we may not ascend by night.
però è buon pensar di bel soggiorno.	Now is the time to choose a resting place.[257]

Dante and Virgil learn that the evening is a time of contemplation, but just because the souls are not allowed to make physical progress up the hill after dark, they can make spiritual progress.[258] That evening in the Valley of Negligent Princes, they listen to the enlightening hymns and they watch the spectacle of a serpent entering the valley, just as it had done in Eden. In this instance however the narrative has been corrected; the serpent is chased away by avenging angels (canto 8). The evening is a time of partaking of the good fruit of positive learning. After the excitement of the evening's lessons, Dante falls asleep and has visionary dreams of being snatched up like Ganymede and transported to a higher (spiritual, intellectual, ecstatic) level. Even in Dante's sleep there

[256] Donato Giannotti, *Dialogi di Donato Giannotti: De' giorni che Dante consumò nel cercare l'inferno e 'l purgatorio* (Firenze: Tip. Galileiana, 1859).
[257] Dante, *Purgatorio*, VII, 43-45
[258] This happens two more times: in Canto 17.89-90, and Canto 27.97–108. In Canto 17 at nightfall on the second night Virgil tells Dante, "turn your mind to me, and you will take some good fruit from our delay" (*volgi la mente a me, e prenderai alcun buon frutto di nostra dimora*) and then he proceeds to expounds on natural and elective love. That night he dreams of a siren that represents the internal struggle between his desires. In Canto 27, at the entrance to the Garden of Earthly Delights, Dante dreams of Rachel and Leah who represent active and contemplative life.

is a forward, upward advance. Its measure is gained not by physical distance, but through contemplative understanding and moral growth.

The attitudes of the two dukes, as well as their relative pairs of times of day, reinforce the cyclicality of day and night, active and contemplative life. Robert Durling explains Dante's understanding of the two as a complementary system that give a slight privilege to the contemplative life:

> The acquisition and practice of the moral virtues is strictly speaking internal to the soul, the active life has a partly external goal, since it always involves relations with other persons and with external goods. But because the intellect is man's highest gift, the contemplative life is superior to the active. The contemplative life maintains external calm but it has internal action which may be described with similes from exterior action. The final goal of contemplative life is the vision of God, while its mediate end is the contemplation of truths deriving from and leading to God.[259]

Michelangelo's Dukes communicate these characterizations. The active *Giuliano*, interacts with the external world by turning his attention toward arriving visitors who would have entered the door opposite the modern entrance, near the *acquasantiera*. He invites the view's participation, while also standing guard over the sanctuary. The wake and the repose of both *Day* and *Night* are restless; they mimic his activity in their twisted and contorted poses. The activity of Night, however, is internal, and therefore contemplative. The tension and instability of her uncomfortable pose suggest that her state of repose may be troubled by her dreams. Likewise, Day's waking hours also appear troubled; while his upper body turns away in closure, he turns his lower body and his attention toward us, making him active. His sidelong glance over his right shoulder looks towards the world with energy and alertness.

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[259] Dante, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri : Volume 2: Purgatorio.* ed. Robert Durling, p. 595.

On the opposite side, the contemplative Lorenzo considers, not the spectator, but the Madonna on the end wall, and perhaps even the greatness of the men buried beneath her. As mentioned above, his entire stance is closed, which in turn relates that his action is internal, contained within his thoughts. The stillness suggested by his pose is reflected in the times of day that appear below him. Ironically, *Dawn* and *Dusk*, the most fleeting times of day when the sun is closest to the horizon; in fact, Michelangelo has made them the most horizontal of the four figures. Their languid forms relate that Dawn and Dusk exist in a perpetually suspended moment. They are reminiscent of another Dantean passage from the *Paradiso* 29:

Quando ambedue li figli di Latona,	When the two offspring of Latona,
coperti del Montone e de la Libra,	one covered by the Ram, one by the Scales,
fanno de l'orizzonte insieme zona	together make a belt of the horizon
quant' è dal punto che 'l cenìt inlibra	for the moment that the zenith
infin che l'uno e l'altro da quel cinto,	holds them balanced, until each of them,
cambiando l'emisperio, si dilibra,	in changing hemispheres, unbalances that belt,
tanto, col volto di riso dipinto,	for just that long, her face lit by a smile,
si tacque Bëatrice, riguardando	Beatrice was silent, staring intently
fiso nel punto che m'avëa vinto.	at the point that overcame me.[260]

The poet is referring to the brief moment when the sun and the moon are balanced on opposite horizons (as are *Dawn* and *Dusk*). He utilizes the simile to refer to the pause (in time) between Beatrice's speech, when she gazes at God (the spatial point by which Dante was overcome) and smiles. Beatrice's gaze toward God recalls duke's gaze toward Mary and the Christ child, both of whom represent love and salvation. The balanced positions of *Dawn* and *Dusk*, places them on the verge of a tipping point, akin to that of the sun and the moon as they are exchanging hemispheres. That which should be a brief

[260] Dante, *Paradiso*, 29.1-9.

moment between balance and imbalance is left suspended, like the fixed image of Beatrice that Dante holds fondly in his mind.

The poses of both *Dawn* and *Dusk* are nearly mirror images of one another, both conform to the lid of the sarcophagus beneath them. The poses differ only in the fact that one is rising while the other falls; the left arm and leg of Dawn move upward, while the right arm and leg of Dusk are weighted downward. Both poses are open and relaxed, exemplifying the state of mind necessary for contemplation, removed from worldly distractions. Of the two figures, *Dusk* represents the more contemplative of the two, his motion is downward, heading toward the restful hours of the day. Dusk in the *Divine Comedy* is always a moment of introspection; *il Crepuscolo*, in fact, turns his attention inward and stares down toward the ground, lost in thought. Dawn is shown to be rising and is therefore the more active of the two. Despite her reluctance to rise, she looks toward the viewer with blind eyes, and her parted lips may even suggest speech.

On the end wall where the tomb of the *magnifici* would have stood, there is a Madonna and Child, flanked by the Medici saints Cosmas and Damian (Figure 214). The Madonna and Child, as we have seen above in our discussion of the *Doni Tondo,* are a doorway to salvation. They are the focus of Lorenzo's gaze, as he contemplates salvation. The active and the contemplative can also be discerned in the stillness of Mary consumed by her thoughts, which is countered by the activity and the twisting energy of the Christ child.

The four times of day, with their implied movements can be seen as representing a form of polynarrativity. If the fours time of day, represent the four ages of man, as

suggested in Dante's *Convivio*, they in turn represent the hours, seasons, elements, qualities and temperaments of the soul. The variety of symbolic registers offers many levels of significance which can be read by the viewer simultaneously or chronologically, in linear or cyclical patterns. Each cycle represents the entirety of a narrative in and of itself, but each may be read also in relation to others. These cycles, which also function within the greater narrative of the Sacristy in relation to the salvation of souls, repeat simultaneously and continuously within its space *ad infinitum*.

Times of day	**Dawn**	**Day**	**Dusk**	**Night**
Ages of man	Adolescence: youthful body, harmony of form	Maturity: vigor, strength and activity	Old Age: first signs of decay	Senility: approaching death/final rest
Canonical hours	up to tierce	tierce to nones	nones to vespers	vespers onward
Seasons	Spring: promise of fertility	Summer: Sun at its apex, maximum productivity (action)	Fall: harvest begins, activity slows, time of contemplation	Winter: dormancy, regeneration, death
Element	Air	Fire	Earth	Water
Qualities	hot and moist	hot and dry	cold and dry	cold and moist
Temperament	sanguine	choleric	melancholic	phlegmatic
Characteristics of temperament	courageous, hopeful, playful, carefree	ambitious, leader-like, restless, easily angered	despondent, quiet, analytical, serious	calm, thoughtful, patient, peaceful

The *Last Judgment*: the end of time

The salvation and the damnation of souls is the topic of Michelangelo's infinitely turning cyclone depicting the end of time. Within the iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel, the *Last Judgment* (Figure 215) located on the altar wall, acts as the temporal bookend to the Genesis cycle painted in the vault above, thereby completing the

great cycle of time in the universe. Michelangelo's composition of the end of time depicts the events of the Last Judgment, but it also depicts the divine atemporal consciousness of God. Michelangelo's omnipotent and omniscient Creator seen in the Sistine ceiling, and his ruling son/sun-God at the end wall, have a panoptic view of the entire chapel, which symbolically represents all of time: past, present and future. The absence of measurable space in the ethereal atmosphere of the *Last Judgment* hinders the measurement of time as we know it. The predictable cyclicality of time in the New Sacristy, read in the perpetual rising and falling arcs of the four parts of day, does not exist here. Instead, the deliberate lack of spatial and linear clarity, caused by the cosmic chaos and a boundless flux of motion, makes it virtually impossible for the viewer to arrange the events into any clear chronological order. We see events as God sees them, simultaneously.

Throughout the Old and New Testament there are references to the end of days and final reckoning; the textual accounts of the moment of Judgment, however, are not particularly rich with details.[261] The most vivid and complete narrative of the Apocalypse is found in the Book of Revelation. It describes not only the judgment before God, but all of the signs (earthquakes, plagues, wars, etc.) that will signal the end of days. Compared to the rest of the narrative, the verses concerning the Judgment are relatively few:

> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is

[261] Some of the more extensive references are: Matthew 24:3-14; Mark 13; Luke 17:137; Daniel 12:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 5-9.

> the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.[262]

Aside from the enthroned God, the dead great and small awaiting judgment, and the book of life, there are really no other details to set the scene. Details such as the resurrection of the dead, and even Hell itself (designated as per the ancient tradition as a lake of fire) are mentioned but not described.

In his description of the *Last Judgment*, Condivi cites three texts as sources for Michelangelo's imagery: the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, the Old Testament prophecy of Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14), and Dante's *Commedia*. Condivi makes the connection between the Book of Revelation and Michelangelo's composition because of the "seven angels described by St. John in the Apocalypse who, with trumpets at their mouths, are calling the dead to Judgment from the four corners of the world". Condivi, however, has his sources slightly confused. The seven trumpeting angels are mentioned in Revelation but not specifically in relation to the calling of the dead in Chapter 20; they appear much earlier in the narrative, in Chapter 8:2. After the breaking of the Seventh Seal, God gives a trumpet to each of the seven angels. As each angel sounds his horn, a form of destruction is unleashed upon the earth (a portent of the impending Day of Judgment). A more likely source for the angels is Matthew 24:31: "And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

[262] Revelation 20:11-15.

Michelangelo's angels, as Condivi correctly assumes, are rousing the dead from their burial places, but there are perhaps doing even more.

The biographer attributes the Prophecy of Ezekiel as a source of inspiration for some of the imagery of the resurrection:

> So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.
>
> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.[263]

The attribution seems accurate; Michelangelo depicts the various stages of restoration of the bodies recounted in Ezekiel. Some of the dead are just bones, while others are more or less covered with their skin and flesh.[264] Moreover, the four angels that blow their trumpets in the direction of the rising dead have puffed cheeks that recall the zephyrs (the four winds from the "four corners of the earth"). This may indicate that their purpose extends beyond awakening of the dead: they breathe life back in to them. Finally, Dante is undeniably credited as the source for Michelangelo's depiction of two pagan figures of Charon and Minos, the inclusion of which was seen as highly controversial in the era of the Council of Trent. Though Condivi attributes only the presence of Charon and Minos to the influence of Dante, I believe that this is not the only use of Dante's ideas that we will see in the *Last Judgment*, as will be discussed ahead.

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[263] Ezekiel 37:7-10

[264] An early similar example that Michelangelo may have know is found in the Camposanto at Pisa in the Triumph of Death by Traiani (or Buffalmacco). To the far left there is a depiction of the three living and the three dead. The three dead are shown in various stages of decomposition.

The proof of Condivi's identifications of various texts sources is relevant to our purpose in understanding that Michelangelo—very much like Ghirlandaio in his Sassetti *Adoration* (see Chapter Three)—is utilizing intertextual polynarrativity to inform his rendering of the *Last Judgment*. By drawing from several sources, he creates a more complete, complex, and potentially unique narrative. In order to appreciate the innovations of Michelangelo, we should first examine some examples from the visual tradition of *Last Judgment* scenes that Michelangelo may have known.

In the Byzantine and Gothic visual tradition the *Last Judgment* is organized in a highly structured, systematic and symmetrical manner. At the center we find a depiction of Christ Pantocrator (judge or lawgiver). He sits alone, enthroned within a mandorla, which is sometimes surrounded by angels. These Pantocrators are typically seated erect and facing the viewer. Their judgment is expressed calmly and passively by raising the saved with an upturned right palm, and condemning the wicked with a downturned left palm. On either side of Christ there is usually a series of levels or strata to organize the hierarchies of the saints and the angelic orders. Below are the dead. They are frequently depicted either crawling out of their tombs, lined up on either side for judgment, or are in the process of being ushered by angels toward either Heaven or Hell. Heaven is always located to Christ's proper right and is sometimes depicted either as a garden (Rev. 21.1 - Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea), or as a manifestation of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2 - I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband). Hell, located

to the left of Christ is often depicted as a compartmentalized structure filled with devils who torture the damned in various ways. Such representation became particularly common after the influence of the *Divine Comedy*.[265]

Certainly one of the largest and earliest *Last Judgments* Michelangelo would have known is found among the cycle of mosaics in the domed ceiling of the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence, produced during the second half of the thirteenth-century (Figure 216). Above the altar at the west end of the baptistery, the monumental figure of Christ Pantocrator sits atop a throne formed by the spheres of the universe and the stars, enclosed within a circular mandorla. On either side there are three divisions. The highest level is for the angels who carry the instruments of Passion, led by two trumpeting angels. The saints and apostles are seated against a golden background at the central level, with Mary closest to Christ on the right, and John the Baptist on his left. On the lower level, immediately below Christ, the dead climb out of their tombs. To the right they are greeted by angels, and on the left, by devils. On the lower right there is an angel carrying a scroll that reads "*Venite beneditti Patris mei / [p]ossidete preparatum*." The verse is Matthew 25:34, God's welcome to the saved souls: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Dante also hears this welcome from behind the door that opens to allow him entry to the Earthly Paradise in Purgatory 27:58. In the San Giovanni mosaic, another angel opens the door to the New Jerusalem, and farther to the right the three patriarchs are seated with

[265] See Chapter Three "Iconography of the Last Judgment" of Shrimplin's *Sun Symbolism and Cosmology* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2000) for a comprehensive study of the iconographic tradition that preceded Michelangelo.

children (innocent souls) in their laps. The lower left represents Hell. Throngs of unfortunates are pushed toward the chaos of a fiery abyss, where Satan presides, devouring the dead. The depiction of hell has not yet acquired the highly divided structure that was certainly influenced by Dante's description in the *Commedia.*

A more Dantean structure of Hell is seen in later Florentine *Last Judgments*, for example in that of Orcagna in the Strozzi Chapel (ca. 1345), as well as in that of Fra Angelico at San Marco (ca. 1431). The Strozzi chapel in the Dominican basilica of Santa Maria Novella, painted in the middle of the Trecento by Orcagna and his brother Nardo di Cione, articulates the *Last Judgment* across the three walls of the chapel. The liturgical end of the chapel (Figure 217) contains the Pantocrator. He can be seen above the stained glass window adorned with images of Mary and Saint Dominic, the patrons of the church. Just below him are two trumpeting angels and other angels with the instruments of the passion. Below them at the center, on either side, the Apostles and Mary sit enthroned upon clouds. Below them at ground level on the proper right are saints, religious and lay figures that are among the saved. An angel assists one of the saved out of a grave. On the proper left are the damned. Among their numbers, pagan rulers, heretics and other false religious figures can be identified by their garments. A devil pulls one of the damned out of the grave with a metal hook. The side wall depicting Heaven is entirely filled with hierarchical rows of the blessed: saints, martyrs, rulers and plebs, with the seraphim and cherubim at the top. At the center on a double throne, Christ and Mary are seated as the rulers of Heaven. Though badly damaged, Orcagna's representation of Hell presents a

much more complex organization of the infernal realm, with details inspired by the imagery and structuring described by Dante.

On a much smaller scale, Fra Angelico's unusually shaped *Last Judgment* panel of 1431(Figure 218) is arranged on just two levels. The panel exhibits a sense of spatial depth uncommon in the iconography of this scene. The depth is created by a foreshortened avenue of open and empty sepulchers that leads toward the edge of the earth at the horizon line. Directly above, suspended in midair is Christ in a mandorla of angels, two of which are trumpeting toward the dead at the bottom. The seated apostles and saints are arranged on either side of Christ forming a semicircle above the resurrected that enhances the depth. Most of the joyful saved on Christ's right look up toward the heavenly elite, but some converse with each other (Figure 219). In the foreground, an angel embraces a tonsured monk in a white habit, most likely a member of the Camaldolese order, since the work was commissioned for their Santa Maria degli Angeli church in Florence. Beyond them, two more friars walk through the lush garden of Paradise, where angels dance in a circle. To the far right two more blessed souls bask in the golden light that issues from the gate of the walled city of the New Jerusalem. On the opposite side of the central avenue, the damned are ushered toward a dark hole in the side of the mountain (Figure 220). The cut-away side of the mountain offers us a glimpse of the horrors within, as the various sins are punished in sectioned pits.

By and large the general iconography of the Last Judgment remained relatively standard: static and highly structured. Fourteenth-century *Last Judgments,* like that of Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel (Figure 221), approximate a space-less Heaven by means

of a gold background or empty sky. They continued, however, to impose a rigid order on the composition through the marked hierarchical divisions between the groups. Fra Angelico presents a new handling of space as well as some additional details and movement among the figures in Heaven (the dancing angels and the saved who converse, stroll and embrace). These activities are inventions of the artist since none are specified in the source texts. The setting is also Fra Angelico's interpretation of verses from Revelation. The garden and the glittering reformed Jerusalem indicate the Rev. 21:1-2 (quoted above). The center portion of the panel with its edge-of-the-world view, is likely an attempt to depict Revelation 6:14: "The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place."

The Apocalypse cycle painted by Luca Signorelli from 1500-1504 in the San Brizio chapel of the Orvieto Cathedral (Figure 222) presents more innovations. The decoration of the sails in the vaulting of the chapel was begun in the late 1440s by Fra Angelico and his assistants, among whom we find Benozzo Gozzoli. Signorelli's wall frescos relate the entire Apocalypse text (drawing from the Book of Revelation and several other source texts) articulated over a series of monoscenic images, each painted in a separate lunette or end wall. The first lunette on the left, entering the chapel, depicts *The Preaching of the Antichrist* which is followed by the *Destruction of the World,* painted on the reverse face of the entry wall. These stories are recounted in various sources: The gospel of Matthew 24:5-10, the Book of Revelation, the Golden Legend and

in the *Dies irae* hymn.[266] The next scene is the *Resurrection of the Flesh* (Figure 223), first lunette on the right, entering the chapel. Signorelli's depiction of the dead rising from the ground, some still in skeletal form, and others miraculously restored, is among the first to utilize the text of the Valley of Dry Bones in the Prophecy of Ezekiel as its source. From here, we move to the liturgical end wall that depicts the Fra Angelico's *Christ Pantocrator* (Figure 224) in the sail above the lunette (we should note the pose of Christ which may have been of inspiration to Michelangelo). Within Signorelli's lunette on either side of the window is the *Ascent to Heaven and the Descent to Hell.* The ascending saved (Figure 225) are accompanied by the music of the angels to a golden firmament. They are being led, beyond the frame, to the next lunette on the proper right, where more *angeli musicanti* accompany the harmony of the blessed in *Heaven*. The *Descent* (Figure 226) is the first undeniably Dantean imagery of the descent into Hell, taken directly from Canto 3 of the *Inferno*. Signorelli depicts the Cowards on the far shore of Acheron, forever running behind a devil carrying a banner, bitten by flies and stung by wasps.[267] The near shore, in the lower right corner shows the damned being

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[266] Matt. 24.5-10: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people."
Leg. Aur. "The Advent of the Lord": "The second thing that shall be afore judgment, shall be the folly and malice of Antichrist; he shall pain him to deceive all men by four manners. The first manner shall be by suasion and false exposition of Scripture. […] The second manner shall be by marvelous operation of miracles […] The third manner that he shall do for to deceive, shall be in giving of gifts […] The fourth manner for to deceive them shall be by torments that he shall give to them."

[267] "And I, all eyes, saw a whirling banner / that ran so fast it seemed as though / it never could find rest. / Behind it came so long a file of people / that I could not believe / death had undone so many." (*Inf.* 3.52-57) These wretches, who never were alive /were naked and beset / by stinging flies and wasps

beaten and dragged toward the depiction of *Hell* (second lunette on the right side of the chapel – proper left the judgment scene). In Hell there is further torment and an array of colorful and imaginative demons. There is not however, the same organizational schemes and compartmentalized divisions of the earlier depictions of Hell.

While Signorelli's frescos certainly served as inspiration for Michelangelo, and perhaps as a model for the intertextual weave of source materials, there are very distinct differences. The most obvious difference is that Signorelli depicts various scenes of the overall narrative divided among separate spaces, whereas Michelangelo creates a unified composition. There is still a concrete sense of space in Signorelli's compositions; all of his figures, except the angels, walk on solid ground. The compositions are arranged with a sense of spatial depth. In Signorelli's *Heaven* there is still a lingering hierarchical division. The angels are depicted larger and clothed, while the saved souls are slightly smaller and naked. The saints reside high above in the sails of the vaulting, far removed. Michelangelo erases these divisions for the most part; the sizes of his figures are not necessarily tied to their heavenly rank. Within the groups of the elect on both sides of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, saints freely intermingle with prophets, sibyls, holy figures and other random saved souls.

Michelangelo unifies not only the populations in Heaven, he unifies the action to a single unified space, which in turn suggests the simultaneity of action. Since the structured spatial divisions of the earlier *Last Judgments* is no longer to be found, the reading order of Michelangelo's image is not as easily manifest, because it is not

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/ that made their faces stream with blood /which, mingled with their tears" (*Inf.* 3.64-68).

predetermined. This freedom from spatial and temporal constraints is the greatest innovation of the Sistine *Last Judgment* because it mimics the simultaneity of action as God sees it.

The timeless space, as Tolnay notes, "is neither a limited space geometrically constructed according to Euclidean laws, nor is it illusionist space created by pictorial values: it is a void freed of all spatial and temporal contingencies."[268] In fact, Michelangelo appears to be inspired once again by Dante's cosmic journey. During the journey beyond the Primum Mobile toward the Empyrean, where God and all the blessed souls reside, Beatrice explains the difference between the two heavenly spheres, the latter being beyond space and time:

e questo cielo non ha altro dove
che la mente divina, in che s'accende
l'amor che 'l volge e la virtù ch'ei piove.
Luce e amor d'un cerchio lui comprende,
sì come questo li altri; e quel precint
colui che 'l cinge solamente intende.
Non è suo moto per altro distinto,
ma li altri son mensurati da questo,
sì come diece da mezzo e da quinto;
e come il tempo tegna in cotal testo
le sue radici e ne li altri le fronde,
omai a te può esser manifesto.

This heaven has no other where
but in the mind of God, in which is kindled the
love that turns it and the power it pours down.
Light and love enclose it in a circle,
as it contains the others. Of that girding
He that girds it is the sole Intelligence.
Its motion is not measured by another's,
but from it all the rest receive their measures,
even as does ten from its half and from its fifth.
How time should have its roots in a single vase
and its foliage in all the others
may now become quite clear to you.[269]

Within this 'space' time cannot be measured by any scientific means. We are, as Dante writes, in the mind of God, "*là 've s'appunta ogne* ubi *e ogne* quando" (there where every *ubi* [place/where] and every *quando* [time/when] has its center).[270] In the mind of God

[268] Tolnay, 50; Hibbard calls it "peculiarly spaceless", 246.
[269] Dante, *Paradiso*, 27.109-20.
[270] Dante, *Paradiso*, 29.12.

there are no divisions of past, present and future; all events happen with simultaneity, and God is simultaneously conscious of all of them.

Michelangelo has taken to heart Dante's description of an atmosphere that cannot be conceived under such laws of measure and perception. The space in the Sistine *Last Judgment* is collapsed. However, there are still some remnants of spatial division. The pockets of figures distributed in the space separate them into groups, but the reading order remains fairly arbitrary. Other than the representative bit of earth at the bottom of the composition, there is nothing to clearly measure distance. Michelangelo has shown that the laws of measure are not applicable to this area beyond space and time. For example, we cannot rely on the laws of perspective to understand the proximity of figures from the picture plane based on their size. Large and small intermingle, but they are not necessarily, or clearly, related to any hierarchical status. It is possible that the discrepancy of size can be interpreted through Rev. 20:12, "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne." Great and small can have several connotations: size, age, civic, religious or spiritual status, or even as a quotient of virtue. The physical size and strength of the figures however, like space and time, have no currency here.

Michelangelo leaves the reading order to the discretion of the viewer, encouraging a variety of interpretations. Although there is no one single way to read the *Last Judgment*, the narrative is not left to total chaos. Michelangelo does provide signposts that the spectator can follow in order to make sense of such complex imagery. As an example of how Michelangelo possibly guides our reading through visual clues, we can consider the central figure of Christ. The void around him and the bright light that

emanates from behind him, naturally attract our eye to this focal point of the composition. Michelangelo's Christ is vibrant and dynamic and unique from earlier stiff and passive depictions of the Pantocrator. Like a conductor, Christ orchestrates the action, giving the universe the motion by which all things are measured. We should recall Fra Angelico's Christ in the San Brizio chapel at Orvieto (Figure 224) and note the novelty of the raised positioning of Christ's right arm. A similar pose with the right arm raised can be seen in two subsequent *Last Judgments* by Fra Angelico, one in Berlin ca. 1450 (Figure 227) and the other a panel for the Armadio degli Argenti (Figure 228) at San Marco of 1451-52. In these images, the gesture, though more dynamic than the Byzantine and Gothic images of Christ Pantocrator, is still clearly calling the blessed with the right hand and condemning the damned with the left. In the Orvieto fresco, the left hand of Christ rests on a globe, which typically represents the universe and God's rule over it. The globe appears in neither of the later *Last Judgments*, nor in the earlier 1431 panel mentioned above.

The gesture of Fra Angelico's Orvieto Pantocrator is more ambiguous. Is it simply calling the dead to rise, or is it, like Michelangelo condemning the damned? If it is a condemning gesture, then the hand on the globe is more perplexing; perhaps it signifies the New World to be inherited by the faithful. Instead of looking directly forward, toward the spectator as the earlier depictions had done, the Christ figures by Fra Angelico turn their glance to the left, as does Michelangelo's. The gesture offers a certain level of ambiguity, allowing for multiple interpretations.

In a series of dualities, Michelangelo's depiction of Christ embodies the immeasurability of his nature. Caught between sitting and standing, he simultaneously

condemns with a raised right hand and saves with the left (the opposite of how it had traditionally been depicted). He is both Man of Sorrows and wrathful God, Greek Apollo and Christian God. He is everything all at once. Not even his facial expression betrays any definitive emotion; it is neither vengeful nor merciful, but simply impassive and entirely unaffected by his actions.[271] As Valerie Shrimplin has noted, he is a confluence of all the attributes of Christ's Second Coming: "omniscience, power, righteousness, holiness, love, anger and mercy; […] Christ acts as judge but also mediator, a combination that embraces both the optimistic and pessimistic aspects of the event."[272]

The action begins and ends with the Alpha and Omega (the phrase is mentioned three times in Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). The movement around Christ is swirling; it orbits him, but not in any particular direction, or order, that can be easily discerned. Figures simultaneously move in all directions. They are not, as Dante describes, all looking at the glory of God (*Par*. 29.76-80), nor are they circling in nine perfect concentric circles around the sun-Christ (*Par*. 28.13-36). The higher ranks of Michelangelo's blessed appear to swoop in from the four corners of the earth. They are both drawn by his gravitational pull, yet are kept at bay, like the attraction and repulsion of magnets. Mary represents this duality: she draws near to Christ, almost appearing his appendage, yet, she turns away from his harsh demeanor which is not intended for the blessed.

The void and the bright light around Christ single him out from the nebula of the Elect on either side. From this central figure, we can continue our reading of the image

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[271] Hibbard, p. 246.

[272] Valerie Shrimplin, 23. For the dual nature of Christ, Marcia Hall defends 1 Corinthians 15 as a source for Michelangelo's inspiration: see Marcia B. Hall, "Michelangelo's Last Judgment: Resurrection of the Body and Predestination," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Mar., 1976), 85-92.

in any direction. Each direction leads to areas of visual interest spurred by the multitude and variation of figures, poses, expressions, actions, etc. that create smaller narratives within the composition. For example, to the immediate left of Christ the saints appear to react with surprise at Christ's *terribilità* in his resolve to sentence the unrepentant to a second death. With their gestures they attempt to intercede, to ask for mercy. But their pleas are in vain; they cannot penetrate the void that separates them, just as no one can penetrate the mind of God. Only the compassionate Mary, as queen of Heaven, can share his space in the mandorla, but not even she can influence the absolute and final judgment of God.

In order to follow a chronology of the narrative as it is presented in the source texts, we should begin with Christ at the center and move downward. The pale color of Jesus' legs draws our eye downward to the funnel formed by leg of St. Bartholomew and the arm and gridiron of St. Lawrence. This leads directly to the isolated group of angels below. Michelangelo's angels are not seven—like Condivi mentioned, thinking of the story of the Apocalypse—but eight perhaps in reference to the Resurrection and Day of Reckoning. One angel holds the small Book of Life, while it takes two to manage the much larger Book of Death, which lists the damned and is poised directly above Charon. In the Gospel of Luke 13:23-24, there is mention of the small number that will be saved compared to the many that will be lost: "Then said one unto him, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' And he said unto them, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'" Again, as he has often done

elsewhere, Michelangelo is creating his own unique narrative interpretation; not following any specific text, he draws from several.

The trumpeting, book-wielding angels (Figure 229) are Christ's lieutenants; they carry out for him the task of sorting the chaff from the wheat. Their placement directly below Christ and the position of his hands, give the impression that he is puppet master: their hands, his will.[273] Four angels are sounding their trumpets forcibly awakening the dead. The Book of Revelation 2:11-15 mentions, but does not describe, the return of the dead. In Matthew, the dead are heralded by trumpeting angels from the four corners of the earth (Matt. 24: 31). The Prophecy of Ezekeil (Ezekiel 37:7-10) in the Valley of Dry Bones is the most descriptive source for a resurrection of the dead, and the restoration of the bodies, but it does not relate directly to the Last Judgment. In Signorelli's fresco there are only two angels but they seem to have a similar purpose: to sound the call and breathe life back into the resurrected.

Signorelli's resurrected dead climb directly out of the ground either as skeletons, or completely dressed in their tendons, flesh and skin (Figure 230). The remarkable innovation of Michelangelo's *Resurrection* scene—which Condivi noted in detail—is how the resurrected bodies appear in various stages of awakening and restoration (Figure 231). Some are fully whole, others are still in skeletal form, and there are several shown in intermediary stages. Michelangelo is showing us that the process of redressing the bones is gradual, that it does not happen all at once. Some of the fully fleshed are still colored with deathly pallor, or find themselves still too weak to stand. Others, like the

[273] This image is a nice moral contrast to Signorelli's depiction of the devil very deftly guiding the hand of the antichrist in the San Brizio Chapel fresco.

skeleton in the shroud, who holds its chin and looks at us—perhaps the personification of Death—appears in full possession of its faculties, despite its bare-boned state (Figure 232).

Many of the resurrected seem disoriented, unsure of which way to go. On the ground, some of the newly resurrected take care of their companions, showing acts of charity. A priest in the far left corner can be seen reassuring those around him. Figures like the enraptured woman and the two shrouded women (Figure 233) at the rear center of the group ascend toward Heaven instinctively, effortlessly, weightlessly, and unassisted. Others are being assisted to varying degrees. There are two being pulled up by a string of prayer beads and others who are given a helping hand as they continue to climb (Figure 234). They still have to exert a bit of effort in order to ascend, but they do not appear to be at risk of falling since their focus is upward. Although Purgatory was not traditionally depicted in Last Judgment scenes, channeling Dante, Michelangelo may have hinted at the Purgatorial climb in these figures, each of whom are depicted as still having to work to ascend to Heaven. Their labored climb is in stark contrast to the already clean souls who are lifted or ascend unassisted. The security of everyone, however, is not certain; not all of the fates have been decided.

To the right side of the scene, there are dramatic events unfolding which relate other stories. Some of the souls, perhaps the negligent and late repentant (which Dante places in ante-purgatory), must struggle against demons who wish to pull them under. The man seen upside-down (Figure 235) is tormented by a horned devil who attempts to pull him back down by his hair. But he is being assisted by two angels who are wresting

him from the demon. The man screams in agony and the battle appears undecided, but the green and red colors of the angels' robes are the colors of hope and love, which may foreshadow a positive outcome. Next to them another formidable man, still drained of life-force and with his feet ensnared by a green serpent from Hell, is being pulled upward by a young boy dressed in purple (the color of Penitence). Two more men, whose bodies are still too weak, are being pulled into the abyss. The man closest to the picture plane looks at the ground, but the other seems to be calling out to the young boy in purple for assistance. The boy, in fact, looks at him. But here, Michelangelo has left us at another tipping point. The outcome of his plea is undecided and we are left wondering whether this gesture of repentance will be enough to save him. For his companion, the likelihood of being saved seems already doubtful. All of these actions represent Michelangelo's love for ambiguous tipping points: those moments that seem to encompass past, present and future by the way in which their stories may develop in a variety of directions based on how the viewer interprets them.

Equally dramatic moments are unfolding in middle portion on the opposite side of the wall. Above the unfortunate souls in the bark, being bludgeoned by Charon, sentenced by Minos, and tortured by devils, there is a group of souls being beaten down by the angels and pulled from below by devils (Figure 236). Unlike the souls in the boat, these souls refuse to accept their fate. The action is somewhat ambiguous; were they attempting to ascend? Did they live their lives believing to have lived righteously? There is a passage in Luke 13:25-28 which may be of some help in understanding the actions of these damned refusing their fate:

> When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

I would suggest that these figures might also be read as the Cowards that Dante placed at the limits of Hell, just inside the Gates, but across the shores of Acheron, and which Signorelli depicted so deliberately in his *Descent of the Damned* (Figure 237).

...Questo misero modo	…This miserable state is borne
tegnon l'anime triste di coloro	by the wretched souls of those who lived
che visser sanza 'nfamia e sanza lodo.	without disgrace yet without praise.
Mischiate sono a quel cattivo coro	They intermingle with that wicked band
de li angeli che non furon ribelli	of angels, not rebellious and not faithful
né fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sé fuoro.	to God, who held themselves apart.
Caccianli i ciel per non esser men belli,	Loath to impair its beauty, Heaven casts them out,
né lo profondo inferno li riceve,	and the depth of Hell does not receive them
ch'alcuna gloria i rei avrebber d'elli.	lest on their account the evil angels gloat.[274]

These figures in Dante's poem are outcasts. Composed of a group of speculators, neutrals and fence-sitters, their sins were perhaps not as serious, but unlike the late-repentant in Ante-Purgatory, they ultimately did not choose God. In the Book of Revelation (3:15-17) there is less tolerance for such lukewarm behavior and a more serious warning is issued to those who are too cowardly to choose:

> I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out

[274] Dante, *Inferno* 3:34-42

> of my mouth. You say, ´I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

I think that it is possible that Michelangelo could have been drawing from all these various sources. In the Revelation passage there is a reference made to wealth, perhaps linked to the soul seen upside-down, who is being pulled down by a devil and beaten from above by an angel dressed in yellow (Figure 238). The naked man is holding a yellow moneybag (in reference to his greed of riches), but he is also carrying two keys indicating that he is a pope. Incidentally, one of the first souls that Dante recognizes among the cowards, recognized only by the identification of "he who made the great refusal," is thought to stand for Pope Celestine V who abdicated, allowing Dante's archenemy Pope Boniface VIII to assume the papacy. Michelangelo has also given this man a light blue (*celeste)* colored robe.

Just above this group there are the martyrs with their devices. They watch the dramatic scene below them and appear to be at the ready to offer their instruments of torture to the angels. St. Blaise and St. Catherine of Alessandria, in fact, look back toward God as if awaiting his command to intervene. Beyond the martyrs, hordes of blessed souls gather, interact and embrace one another, much in the spirit of Fra Angelico's depiction of the loving interaction among the blessed. This group is counterbalanced by the throngs of holy women and sibyls seen on the opposite side of the wall.

The absence of spatial clarity makes the reading of the image more arbitrary, however through the swirling motion and the actions between certain figures, the artist helps guide the viewer, to some extent, through such complex imagery. Michelangelo's

Last Judgment achieves much of the same narrative scope of Signorelli's San Brizio chapel, but he has succeeded in condensing and unifying the story into one large polynarrative. He creates polynarrativity both through a simultaneous combination of narrative events but also through a combination of source texts, written and visual. From the subjective point of view of the spectator, the lack of a rigid structure encourages the freedom of movement, and therefore countless narratives and reading orders, and subsequently possibilities of interpretation.

The simultaneity of the various narrative events also serves the sacred meaning of the image. As a vision that is present in the mind of God, there cannot be constraints of space and time. Past, present and future are irrelevant. His universe remains in a state of eternal flux. The earlier examples of *Last Judgments* that we have examined, all depicted the final goal: a more concrete place called Paradise. Whether it was expressed as the harmonious order of Heaven, a lush garden, or a representation of the New Jerusalem, in all of these images there is a very concrete terminus. One often overlooked detail of Giotto's *Last Judgment* in the Scrovegni Chapel is that of the two little angels peeling back the sky (Figure 239), interpreting Revelation 6:14: "The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place." The two angels are rolling up the canvas of time to reveal the golden bejeweled walls of the city of Jerusalem described in Rev. 21. This action suggests the definitive end of time: the final destination of the saved. Michelangelo does not show us the journey's end, nor does he give us any proof that time ends at all. His *Last Judgment* is a meditation on the 'end

time’ and the true meaning of eternity. There is no beginning or end, just a forever evolving cycle: an infinite becoming within the consciousness of God.

Conclusion

To conclude this discussion of time and narrative in Renaissance art we can look at the Sistine Chapel as an example of the simultaneous coexistence of varying modes of temporal expressions in Italian Renaissance art. In its iconographic program, the microcosm of the Sistine Chapel represents the macrocosmic history of Christian time. It spans from God's creation of the universe, through the years of disobedience, punishments, and prophecies. It recounts the teachings Moses (who saved his people and proliferated the laws of God), and those of Jesus (who saved humanity again through compassion and sacrifice). And finally, it leads us to the final judgment and eternity among the blessed or the damned. In terms of art history it represents roughly sixty years in the evolution of pictorial narratives (predominately Tuscan). Within that time frame the artists involved with the decoration of the chapel exhibited the temporal development of their narratives in a variety of ways.

The cycles of the South and North walls, painted between 1481-82 by artists such as such as Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Cosimo Rosselli and Signorelli, depict episodes from the life of Moses and the life of Christ as continuous narratives. Within the pictorial space of a unified setting—in which the unity of space suggests a simultaneity of time—these artists combined several temporally distinct events from within the chronology of the narrative(s). In some compositions the events are conspicuously presented side by side at the foreground and middle ground as can be seen in Signorelli's *Testament and Death of Moses*, or in Botticelli's *Punishment of Korah,*

Dathan and Abiram. In Botticelli's *Scenes from the Life of Moses,* Moses appears six times completing diverse actions. In other scenes, the multiple events are woven into the pictorial tapestry in ingenious ways. For example: Cosimo Rosselli's *Last Supper,* incorporates the subsequent episodes of the Passion (the Agony in the garden, the Arrest of Jesus, and the Crucifixion) as visions of the future set into the landscape, and seen through the three fictive windows above the table. At first glance Perugino's *Surrendering of the Keys* (Matt. 16:13-20) appears to be a monoscenic composition; we hardly notice the two additional scenes, the Payment of the Tribute (Matt. 17:24-27) and of the Attempted Stoning of Christ (John 8:31-59; 10:31-39) set deep into the space of the piazza, on either side of the temple. I have included the biblical references here to show the polynarrative combinations of source texts; an element found also in Ghirlandaio's *Calling of the Apostles*.[275] Images of this type (i.e. continuous narratives) have not been considered in this study because of the way in which they articulate the sequence of several actions occurring over time through the conspicuous repetition of figures set within a unified space. Continuous narratives do, however, represent a significant form of pictorial representation that attempts mimic the diachronic nature of written narrative.[276]

In the vaulting of the Sistine Chapel, painted between 1508-1512, Michelangelo's narratives combine several different temporal expressions. Of the nine stories from the Book of Genesis, three are continuous narratives—though greatly simplified in

[275] Cadogan, 225. See note n.158above.
[276] See, in particular, Lew Andrews, *Story and Space in Renaissance Art: The Rebirth of Continuous Narrative*. (Cambridge [England]; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

comparison to the scenes in the cycles of Moses and Christ below. In *The Drunkenness of Noah*, Noah is first seen planting the vineyard (sowing the seeds of faith), then, in his innocent but imperfect drunkenness, we see the results of his earthly toils: Ham's ridiculing, countered with the respect show by Shem and Japheth.[277] *The Temptation and the Fall* represents the cause and effect of disobeying God's decree. The physical transformation of Adam and Eve, from beautiful and perfect in their innocence, to hideous and hunched forms being expelled from the garden, reflects their loss of spiritual grace. The third example, *The Creation of the Plants, the Sun and the Moon* depicts the Almighty in the midst of his creative fury. To read the image chronologically as in occurs in Genesis, first we encounter him from behind, on day three creating the plants and the trees. Next we see him, on the fourth day, simultaneously creating the sun and the moon: the luminaries that will give the measure of time to earth, separating day from night. Since we are accustomed to seeing someone coming before seeing them going, the image is often read in reverse order. However, as we saw in the *Last Judgment*, we must be reminded that God does not operate under our earthly constraints of time and order. Ironically the image depicts the creation of the very unit of measure by which we gauge time, the division of night and day.

The dynamic nature of God in this image was noted by both Michelangelo's biographers as something quite remarkable, especially for the unusual and novel backside view of God. Condivi marvels at how, "He seems to follow you, revealing the whole length of his back to the soles of his feet." By combining the two sequential moments of

[277] An allegory of the division of the saved and the damned.

the *Creation of the Plants, the Sun and the Moon* simultaneously, Michelangelo created multiple viewpoints of God. In a sense, the artist has transformed this painted figure into a sort of sculpture in the round. Instead of the spectator moving around the figure, it is the figure that rotates for the spectator. In fact, as Vasari notes, the figure of God "continually turns and changes direction as you walk through the chapel."[278] The multiple viewpoints of the image of God generate a nearly 360 degree view of his body. As such, the entirety of the figure can be understood by the spectator much in the same way we experience the evolution and transformations the *Bacchus* or *David* as we move around them.

During a comparison of the levels of difficulty of painting vs. sculpture, Benedetto Varchi, in his Second *Lezzione*, touched on the topic of multiplicity and simultaneity. He explained that sculpture, because of its three-dimensional nature, simultaneously presents "*molte vedute"* (many viewpoints), thanks to the various angles of its multifaceted form. He wrote that the sculptor's work is more difficult because he must carefully consider the outcome of each angle with the greatest care so none appear awkward. Several of the responses received by Varchi (including those of Bronzino, Cellini, and Francesco da Sangallo) attest to the superior level of difficulty of sculpture to simultaneously consider multiple points of view, whereas in painting, there is but one vantage point.[279] Varchi does not deny the complexity and mimetic capabilities of

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[278] Vasari, p. 444

[279] From Agnolo Bronzino's reply: "*Dicono appresso che, dovendo farsi dagli scultori quasi sempre le statue tonde e spiccate intorno, o vestite o gnude che siano, bisogna aver sommo riguardo che stiano bene per tutte le vedute, e se ad una veduta la loro figura arà grazia, che non manchi nell'altre vedute, le quali, rivolgendosi l'occhio intorno a detta statua, sono infinite per essere la forma circolare di tal natura; dove cosi [sic] non avviene al pittore, il quale non fa mai in una figura altro che una sola veduta, la quale*

painting and, in fact, paraphrasing Leonardo he makes reference to painting's ability to present and be perceived at a single glance.[280] Yet the two forms of simultaneity are quite different: sculptural simultaneity exists within the "truth" of the substance of the form itself: all views from all angles exists simultaneously in reality because the object exists in three dimensions. The viewer, however cannot simultaneously see all viewing angles at once. Painting, on the other hand, is an illusion in two-dimensional form. A painting typically presents one viewpoint of a figure, but around it creates a setting and an atmosphere filled with details. Again, all elements are presented simultaneously on the canvas, but the eye of the viewer must still employ a certain amount of time to consider each part and the relationships between them.

Though painted several years before Varchi's inquest, the multiple and varied representations of God on the vault of the Sistine Chapel seem to want to challenge the limitations of painting's single viewpoint.[281] Michelangelo's painting style is undoubtedly sculptural by design, but its two dimensional nature prevents the viewer from seeing all sides of the figural form. Since we cannot move around the figure, the

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sceglie a suo modo. From Benvenuto Cellini's reply: "*Dico che l'arte della scultura infra tutte l'arte che s'interviene disegno è maggiore sette volte, perché una statua di scultura de' avere otto vedute, e conviene che le sieno tutte di egual bontà.* From Francesco da Sangallo's reply: "*Che ancora hanno un altro diletto, quale non è piccolo, che, faccendo le loro pitture, sempre hanno da attendere a una sola veduta, essempligrazia quello pittore che fa il suo ignudo li verrà bene fare in faccia, e così non ha mai a pensare alle parte, né da lato né di dirieto, e questa propietà d'arte dà grandissimo contento e facilità alla pittura.*

[280] Mendelsohn, *Paragoni*, 122. "The ability of sculpture to represent figures as they exist, i.e. three-dimensionally, in-the-round, can be equalled only by painting's ability to represent multiple dimensions *in una subita vista*, at a single glance."

[281] Certainly a similar argument could be made for almost any continuous narrative where a single figure is depicted several times, even among other images within the Sistine Chapel, i.e. Botticelli's *Scenes from the Life of Moses* or *The Punishment of Korah,* but there is a clear distinction between Michelangelo's images, most of which depict almost exclusively God the Father in monumental form, and in a variety of poses. The copiousness of Botticelli's images detract from viewing the protagonist, and the viewing angles are all very similar: typically they are either frontal or show the left profile.

figure has been turned for us in a variety of ways, while also exhibiting a variety of expressions, gestures, *and* narrative actions. It should be noted that the discussions of simultaneity in Varchi's *Lezzioni* do not address the simultaneous representation disparate narrative actions, nor whether there is anything 'unnatural' about continuous or sequential narratives.

Interspersed with the continuous narratives in the vault of the ceiling are monoscenic scenes of which I wish to mention the temporal natures of two: *The Deluge* and *The Creation of Man*. The only image of Michelangelo's ceiling with enough pictorial depth necessary to arrange the order of events spatially is *The Deluge*. Here, Michelangelo may have utilized an arrangement similar to what he had planned for the *Battle of Cascina*, in which various events of the narrative are articulated spatially. The specific events depicted are not drawn from details from Book of Genesis but are creations of the artist that display the *varietas* and *inventio* prescribed by Alberti for proper *historiae*. The placement of the figures within the space, the actions they perform and the emotions they transmit link the groups together to tell a dramatic story. Conversely, the *Creation of Man* represents the precision of a *punctum temporis.* Furthermore, it represents Lessing's idea of the pregnant moment by stopping the action at point where the viewer can envision what will happen next: God is a second away from transferring to Adam the spark of intellect. Undoubtedly the appeal of this image is found in its innovative concept, but also in its unequivocal temporal expression, making it easy to identify.

Finally, we should mention the non-narrative images in the lunettes and webs. In stark opposition to the static nature of the pontiffs in their niches frescoed below the lunettes, Michelangelo's Prophets, Sibyls, and Ancestors, exude life through their naturalistic gestures, and expressivity of actions—all of which want to tell us something about them. Like Leonardo's Apostles of the *Last Supper*, their expressions and attitudes speak volumes about their *concetti del animo* (states of mind). For detailed accounts, I defer to Vasari who, as a spectator struck by the vivacity of these figures, provided insightful interpretations of the mini-narratives inspired by the actions and thoughts of the Sybils and Prophets.[282] The Ancestors in the lunettes and the lateral pendentives, many of which are mothers and children seen in intimate, domestic poses, tell of private moments such as those encountered in Michelangelo's *Taddei* and *Doni* tondos. The discomfort and impossible poses of the twisting, turning *ignudi* suggest their transitory nature of their states, expressing yet another level of temporality.

A more complete analysis of the individual images of the Sistine Chapel would certainly reveal many more examples to demonstrate the variety of temporal expressions employed by Michelangelo, but it is not within the scope of this dissertation. It is, however a subject that calls for further research and examination. I have utilized the example of the Sistine Chapel as a convenient and tidy demonstration of fact that in a relatively contained area—painted, not over centuries, but in the years 1481-82, 1508-12,

[282] A couple of examples: talking about the Eritrean sibyl (who he mislabels) he says that she, "is holding a book at some distance away and is trying to turn a page, while, with one knee over the other, she is absorbed in thought, considering seriously what she must write, while a putto behind her is blowing on a burning brand to light her lamp. […] Old Zachariah who is searching through a book for something he cannot find, with one leg raised high and the other down low, and while in his haste in searching for what he cannot find, with one leg raised high and the other down low, he is oblivious to the discomfort he endures in such a posture." Vasari, *Life of Michelangelo*, pp. 446-448.

and 1536-1541—we find a veritable smorgasbord of potentially contradictory temporal modes that coexist side by side. In *The Temptation and the Expulsion,* Michelangelo uses continuous narrative to collapse together the correlation of cause and effect, but also to demonstrate a transformation that occurred between the two points in time. The continuous narrative, which, by the early Cinquecento had already become somewhat an outmoded narrative form (certainly there are exceptions), is utilized by Michelangelo to create the effect he is looking for, to show his audience the physical/spiritual metamorphosis that Adam and Eve undergo. Near this image, in *The Creation of Adam,* the artist utilizes the stop-action specificity of a pregnant moment. Again, in order to create the desired effect, Michelangelo halts the action, in order that the spectator may contemplate the consequences of such a pivotal tipping point—when God is about to place his trust in man. In *The Deluge,* we follow the narrative flow of a sequence of events through the spatial construction of the scene, the continuity of which is linked together via the actions and the expressions of its figures. Although the combinations of these temporal modes may seem incongruous, they actually work together in harmony to achieve their desired effects.

I should note that it is not only in the work of Michelangelo that we recognize such variety of temporal expressions. We could equally examine the frescos in Raffaello's *Stanze* and certainly the works of other artists to encounter a similar variety of temporal expressions. What this analysis helps us to understand is that the representation of modes of temporality in art is not necessarily as linear as Shaftesbury, Harris and Lessing would have it, just as the history of style is not linear but cyclical. It

demonstrates that Italian Renaissance artists were constantly searching for new and expressive ways to evoke time and sequential action in non-temporal media such as painting and sculpture. And it may even suggest that varying modes of temporality could be employed to add layers of didactic or allegorical significance to a pictorial narrative. It is my hope that the methods of reading I have presented in this dissertation may serve as a critical model for future inquiries regarding the temporal natures of figurative narratives.

In recent years, scholars have just begun to scratch the surface regarding the temporal possibilities of Renaissance painting and sculpture. In her book *Paragoni* (1982), Leatrice Mendelsohn makes mention of Varchi's characterization of simultaneity in sculpture, almost in passing. Mendelsohn has since returned to the subject in an essay published in 2007, "Simultaneity and the Paragone: Justifying Art in the Eye of the Beholder." Mendelsohn explores the concept of time and simultaneity, not necessarily in terms of the intrinsic timeline of the work of art (i.e. the narrative actions that it represents), but rather in terms of the viewer experience or time of contemplation.

Simultaneity, for Mendelsohn, is read in the key of Leonardo's description of painting's ability to present all of its visual virtue *in un subito,* in an instant. In this sense, Mendelsohn sees the simultaneity of painting as a positive factor in the Renaissance because it proved that the pictorial arts could "represent [time] yet not be limited by it."[283] As such, painting, in her opinion, superseded the sequential order of music, theater, literature and even sculpture in the round (which is not viewed all at once, but section by

[283] Mendelsohn, "Simultaneity..." 8.

section). Painting, therefore, goes beyond the capabilities of nature herself, becoming super-natural or sublime. In Mendelsohn view, the static nature of painting was not considered a trait of inferiority in comparison to other art forms, rather it allowed for a deeper experience and a more thorough form of contemplation:

> Painting's limitation – its supposed inability to unfold within time – was thus turned into a positive quality: a way for the individual to become one with God. Experiencing an "epiphany", the viewer (like the artist) could assimilate to God at the moment of creation.[284]

Mendelsohn's discussion of simultaneity very rarely intersects with the occurrence of simultaneously depicted, temporally distinct actions, nor whether they are drawn from one or more source texts. In regards to Masaccio's *Tribute Money*, she considers the repetitions of St. Peter and the tax collector for their imitation of the variety of vantage points which mimics sculpture. She does not view the sequence of actions to constitute temporal disparity, but unity, by depicting an entire event:

> Masaccio used simultaneous narrative in a new way. While the viewer is required to read the episodes separately due to the repetition of figures, they are not perceived as temporally sequential episodes. Instead, the whole, focused on the central image of Christ at the center, is read as a unified event with repercussions; like a pebble thrown into the water, it creates reverberations. [285]

This brings us back to Leonardo's *Last Supper* and to the ripple effect which was suggested by Kemp, and was elaborated above in Chapter Four. What Menedlsohn sees in Masaccio as an expansion of the timeline, or narrative unfolding, is also achieved in a very subtle and almost imperceptible manner in the *Last Supper*, albeit without repetition of the figures. In addition, Leonardo has allowed the expressivity of his figures to propel

[284] Mendelsohn, "Simultaneity...," 9-10.
[285] Mendelsohn, "Simultaneity...," 12.

the action and tell the story: a story which may represent a polynarrative weave of the four gospel accounts. For Mendelsohn the simultaneity of action in the *Last Supper* is more external, and is found in the relationship of the viewer who understands the implication of the Institution of the Eucharist, even though it is not explicitly portrayed. The simultaneity therefore is found in the fact that the sacrament, while not physically visible, is nonetheless understood to exist symbolically through suggestion to the viewer.[286]

The one example of a painting where Mendelsohn comes very close to identifying a polynarrative as it has been defined in the present dissertation is in Leonardo's unfinished *Adoration of the Magi* (1481, Uffizi Gallery, Florence) which predates the *Last Supper*:

> Despite its pictorial limitations, the *Adoration* is depicted as 'in process', that is, unfolding over time, even if that time instantaneously becomes eternal. Leonardo's painting does not exclude motion expressed *through* time, but it seeks to have that unfolding motion be 'seen' by the spectator instantaneously. Each motion is broken down into its component parts so that the separate movements become segments of a continuum. The individual moments of a complete movement are to be read, not in sequence, but as one continuous action *"*tutto in un tempo". The sequential components are to be connected by the observer who unconsciously merges them into a completed action, unifying them into one event.[287]

In my previous discussions of both Leonardo and Michelangelo, I have alluded to the complex nature of the various component parts of the "experience" of an event, rather than the representation of a single synchronic instant, removed from the flow of time. In order to achieve a more accurate sense of the "real" we have seen how both artists sought

[286] Mendelsohn, "Simultaneity... ," 14
[287] Mendelsohn, "Simultaneity... ," 13

a variety of ways to represent the multifaceted nature of human experience. A convenient analogy to express the idea might be found in the polyhedra that Leonardo designed for Luca Pacioli's *De Proportione.* The many surfaces represent the variety of actions, gestures, emotions and dimensions, which exist simultaneously and in a unified whole. But instead of turning our polyhedron around to be able to view the surfaces successively in three dimensions, these artists have, in a sense, unraveled this multifaceted form and have presented all sides simultaneously and harmoniously.

If what I've just described sounds somewhat abstract, there is good reason; it is essentially the definition of cubism. If Impressionist art was concerned with capturing fleeting impressions as quickly as possible, post-impressionist art was very concerned with observations of objects over time and from multiple angles. Consider for example the work of Cezanne (1839-1906), who is often considered a proto-cubist. Especially in his later period, Cezanne's paintings became "a record of an optical experience over a period of time"[288] The Impressionists attempted to capture the optical experience of the ever-changing light and atmospheric conditions as quickly as possible. Cezanne's experiments are accumulations of observations witnessed over time. His later canvases are gradual evolutions of a subject which involved memory, space and time. Certainly the temporality of Cezanne's work, and even that of the cubists that followed are very different from the temporal modes which have been discussed in this paper. Yet

[288] Julian Chehirian, "Time and Cézanne's Later Paintings" *Pharmakon* Journal of Philosophy: 4 (Spring 2013), 32.; see also George Hamilton, "Cézanne, Bergson and the Image of Time" *College Art Journal,* vol 16 (1956), 2-12.

nonetheless, these later artistic styles, which added measurable time and simultaneity of viewpoints can be traced back to these early pioneers of the Renaissance.

One contemporary we should mention is video-artist Bill Viola and his "live" compositions which are shot at 300 frames a second and viewed at ultra slow speeds. Viola's projects are an assimilation of the conventions of painting, with the difference that he is able to infuse his compositions with real, measurable time. *The Greeting* (1995) is a sound/video installation inspired by Pontormo's Carmignano *Visitation* (1528-29), a painting which is unique for it representation of multiplicity and simultaneity. In Viola's *Greeting* a 45 second video clip is stretched out over 10 minutes of viewing. The effect is a video that moves so slowly it almost appears static. Viola paints with video. This leaves the viewer caught between, as Jean Wainwright characterized it, "'real time'—understood in the Newtonian sense of time that is linear, progressive and consistent—and psychological time."[289] Viola's super slow motion allows the viewer to see the tiniest of changes in the actors' expressions, and the affects of their environment and movements (i.e. even the most subtle movements of their garments). The spectators' ability to observe such minor changes over time is not unlike our experience of contemplation of a static work of art over time. In both cases, we are attempting to understand the *concetti dell'animo* (the mindset of the protagonists) in order to better interpret the action.

Only a few years after Michelangelo's *Last Judgment,* we begin to witness a noticeable change in the common temporal modes of the pictorial arts. The Counter-

[289] Jean Wainwright, "Telling Times:Re-Visiting The Greeting." in *The Art of Bill Viola*, edited by Chris Townsend (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 111.

Reformation mandates decreed at the Council of Trent may be among the reasons for this shift. One of the outcomes of the Council was the requirement that religious themes be unequivocal in their representation. If religious art was to be used as propaganda for convincing the faithful to return to the Church, the messages of these stories had to be convincing and clear. In fact, among Counter-Reformation art, one finds numerous stories of martyrdoms and conversions, ecstatic visions of God, miracles, mystical marriages, and the like: all subject matter which begs to be represented at that most crucial culminating (and sometimes pregnant) moment. The popularity of the stop action moment continues on into the Baroque era where dramatic narratives are captured at height of their climactic impact. One has only to consider Bernini sculptures like the *Apollo and Daphne* (1622-1625), *David* (1623-24), or the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* (1647), not to mention, paintings like Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus* (1601), *Boy Bitten by a Lizard (*1594–96), or *Judith and Holofernes* (1599). Even a genre scene like Annibale Carracci's *Beaneater* (1580-90) seeks to freeze time while the *mangiafagioli* is mid-bite. Carracci even manages to catch a single bean as it falls from the spoon. The art from the late Cinquecento forward appears to concentrate its efforts on depicting specific moments, and this perhaps ultimately fueled the Neoclassical arguments of Shaftesbury, Harris and Lessing to privilege the non-ambiguous nature of the specific *punctum temporis.*

The examples of polynarrativity in Renaissance painting we have considered this dissertation provide larger, macroscopic considerations of the events they depict and the connections between them. In photographic terms, we might say that these images

provide comprehensive, wide-angle views of the events they depict. But rather than spanning across space, the breadth of the artist's vision telescopes across time. As a result, this retrospective point of view of the pictorial narrative can be seen as an imitation of the gradual process that the reader must perform in order to navigate the narrative development of written texts. Only after having completed the paragraph, or the chapter, is the reader able to contemplate the meaning of it in a larger context.

Duration, as we have seen with much of the artwork analyzed in this dissertation should be understood as a process of unfolding, a continuous becoming. In order for something to be in a continuous state of becoming, it cannot be completely finished, but must be rather in a state of evolution. Ghirlandaio Sassetti's *Adoration* left clues as to the development of the narrative, to its future events. The continuous loop playback of Leonardo's *Last Supper* takes us through the dramatic moments of the announcement of Christ's betrayal, but leaves us just short of the Institution of the Eucharist, an act that was commemorated within the real space of the refectory, only to be repeated again the following day. Cyclical are also the natures of the process of inebriation and sobriety in the *Bacchus,* the infinite march of time in the *New Sacristy,* and the swirling eternity of the *Last Judgment.*

The narrative of Michelangelo's *David* was, is, and continues to be written by those who look upon him. In a sense it is a story that was never written, and a story left unfinished, like the *David* itself. Michelangelo left a small patch of unhewn marble on the crown of David's head (a leftover remnant of the original block). This little patch of marble leaves David incomplete; it leaves the chapter open to interpretation. It is, in fact,

not unlike Michelangelo's famous signature on the Vatican *Pietà* that open-endedly reads *faciebat* (was making), as opposed to the finality of the more traditionally utilized *fecit* (made). The notion of being imperfect, as in still evolving or not completely finished, is an appropriate metaphor to the reading of artwork in general.

Images

Images: Introduction

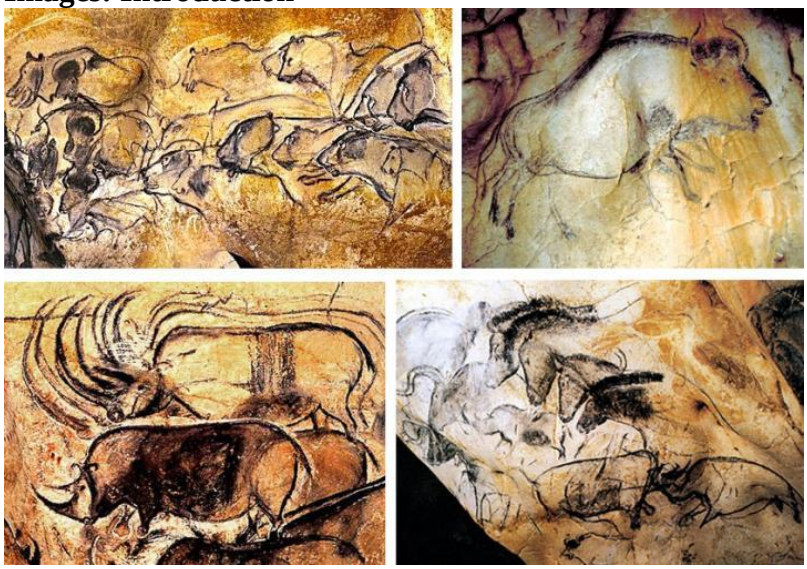

Figure 1 Cave drawings, Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave, ca. 30,000 BC, Ardèche Valley, Southern France. Eight-legged bison, upper right, rhinoceros, lower left.

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Figure 9 Filippo Brunelleschi
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Figure 11 Luca della Robbia, Cantoria (Choir Loft)
1431-38, Marble
Museo dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence.

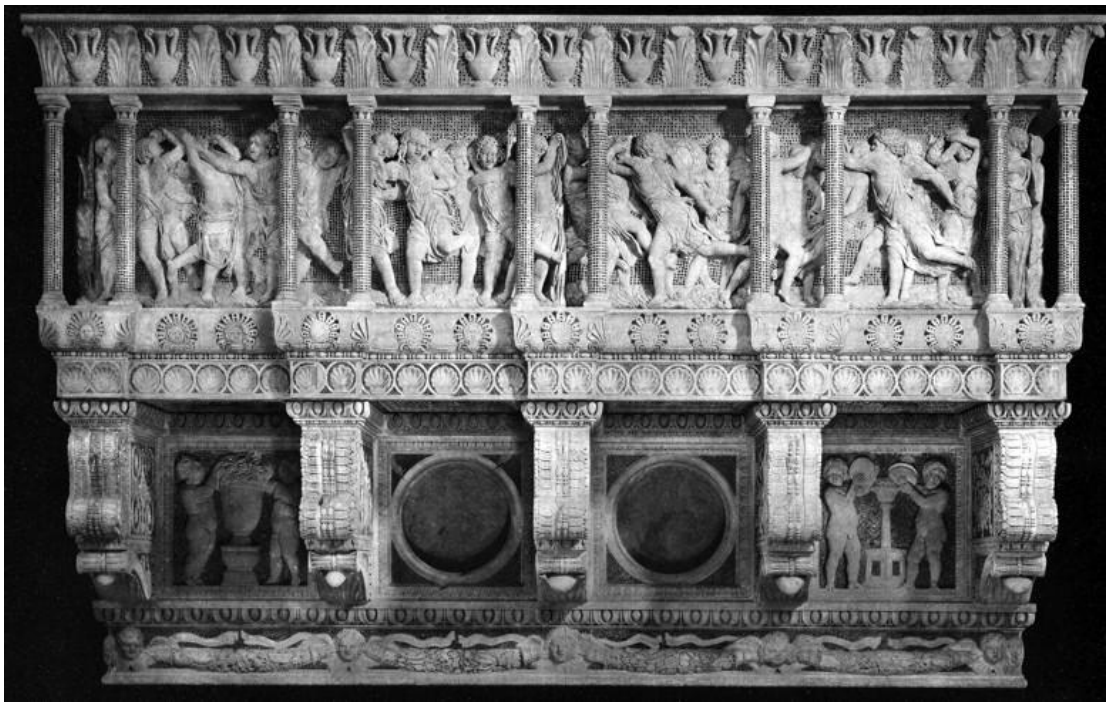

Figure 12 Donatello, Cantoria (Choir Loft)
1433-39, Marble
Museo dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence.

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Figure 13 Giotto, *The Allegory of Chastity*, 1330. Fresco. Lower Basilica, San Francesco, Assisi.

Figure 14 Giotto, *The Allegory of Chastity* (detail), 1330. Fresco. Lower Basilica, San Francesco, Assisi.

Figure 15 Giotto. *The Allegory of Obedience*, 1330. Fresco. Lower Basilica, San Francesco, Assisi.

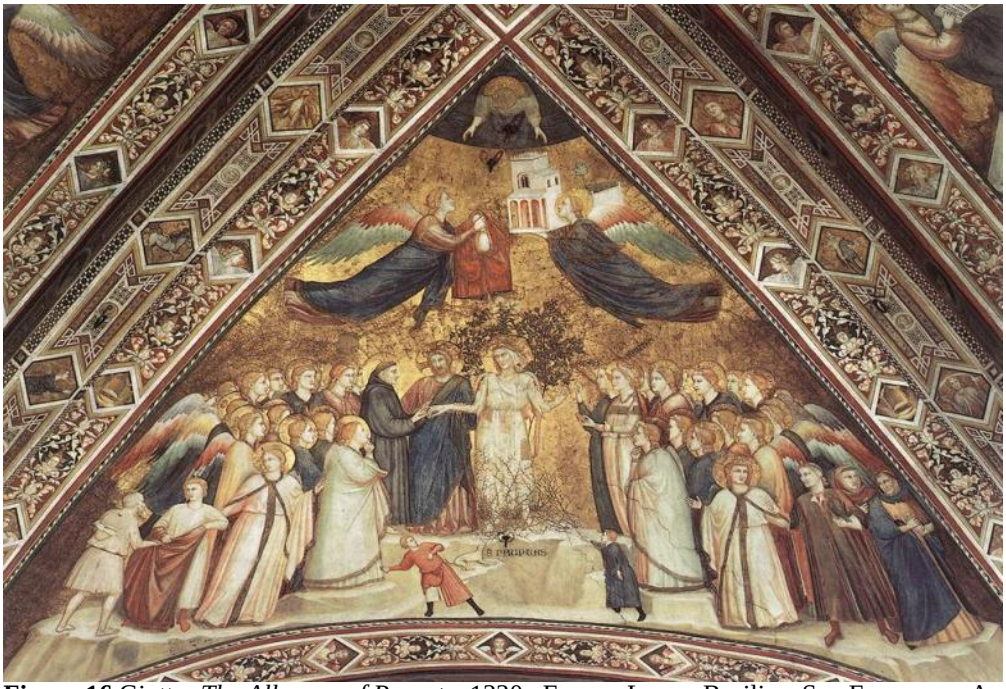

Figure 16 Giotto, *The Allegory of Poverty*, 1330. Fresco. Lower Basilica, San Francesco, Assisi.

Figure 17 Giotto, *The Allegory of Poverty* (detail), 1330. Fresco. Lower Basilica, San Francesco, Assisi.

Figure 18 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Good Government*, 1338-40. Fresco. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.

Figure 19 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Effects of Good Government*, 1338-40. Fresco. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.

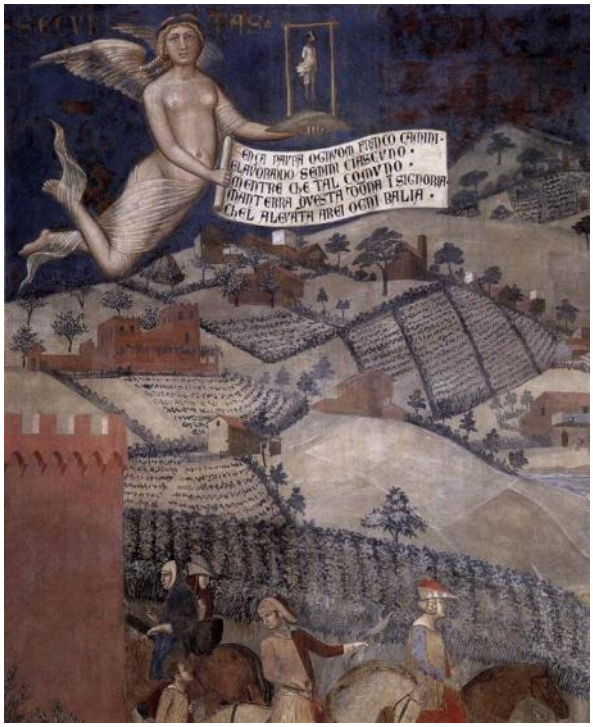

Figure 20 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Effects of Good Government* (detail), 1338-40. Fresco. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.

Figure 21 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Bad Government*, 1338-40. Fresco. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.

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Figure 24 Andrea Bonaiuti, *Via veritatas* (detail), 1365-8. Fresco. Cappellone degli spagnuoli, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

Figure 25 Andrea Bonaiuti**,** *Via veritatas* (detail), 1365-68. Fresco. Cappellone degli spagnuoli, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

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79 x 79 cm.
Museo dell'Opera del
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del Fiore, Florence.

Figure 29 Trajan's column, detail of scene 75, spiral 11, scene D.
Trajan's Forum, Rome

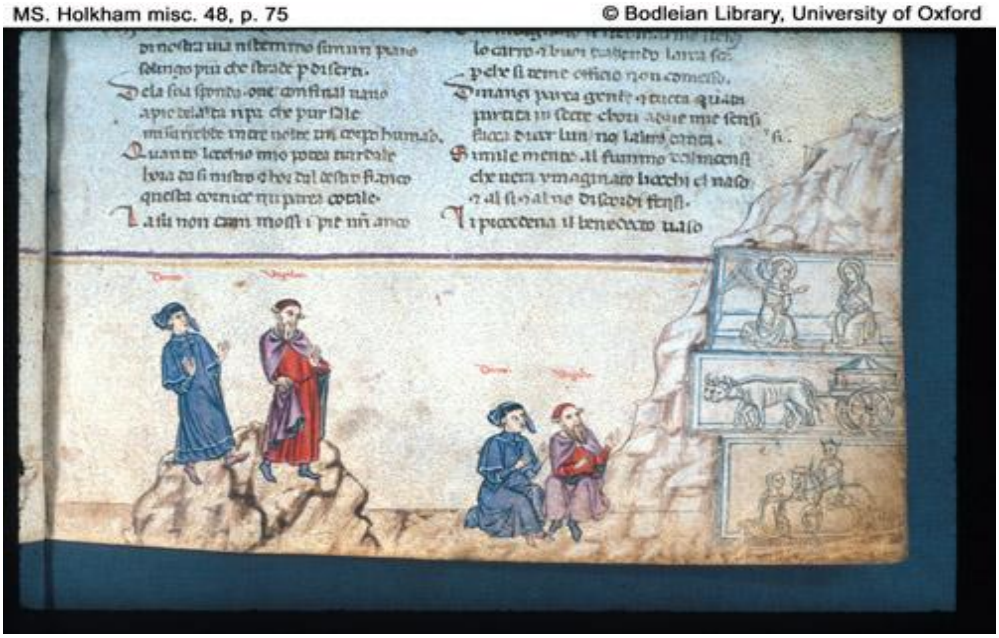

Figure 30 *Divine Comedy* manuscript**,** MS. Holkham misc. 48, p. 75. Bodelian Library, Oxford.
14th cent., third quarter--Dante and Virgil look at three reliefs showing the Annunciation, the Ark of the covenant drawn by oxen, and Trajan and the widow.

Figure 31 Luca Signorelli, *Dante and Virgil Entering Purgatory*, 1499-1502. Fresco.Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

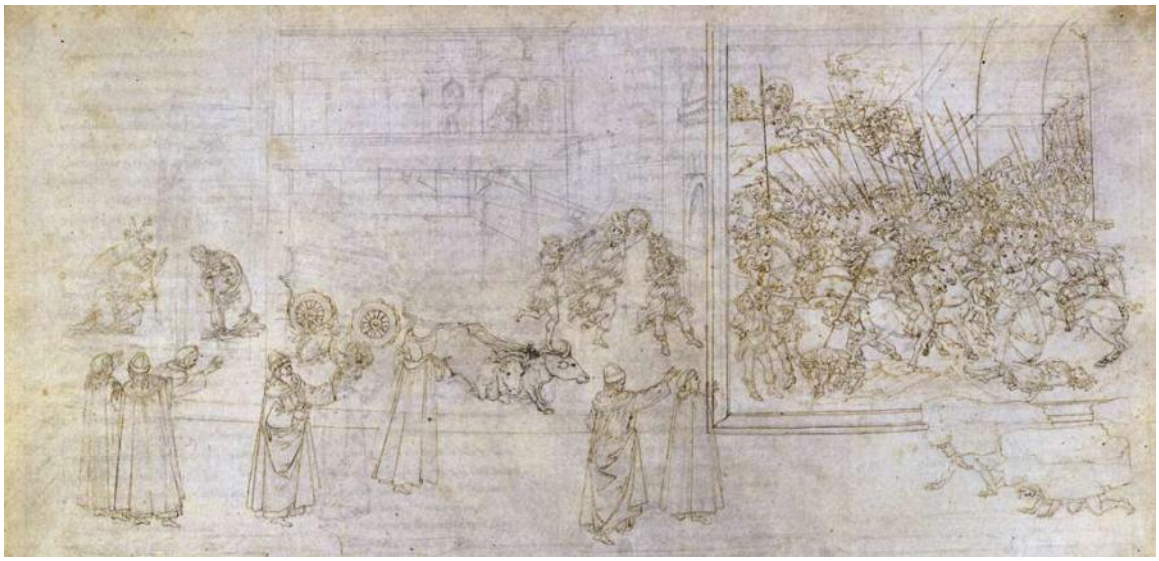

Figure 32 Sandro Botticelli, *Purgatory X* (detail), 1480s. Drawing on parchment, 320 x 470 mm. Staatliche Museen, Berlin

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Figure 33 Guido da Siena, *Annunciation,* ca. 1270. Tempera on panel. Princeton University Museum**.**

Figure 34 Nicola Pisano, *Stories of the Birth of Christ* (detail), ca. 1260. Marble. Pulpit, Pisa baptistery.

Figure 35 - Bottega di Giotto (attr.), Polyptych of Santa Reparata (detail, center panel, reverse), c. 1305-10, Tempera on panel. Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.

Figure 36 - Master of the Spinola Annunciation, c. 1320. Tempera on panel. dismantled polyptych). Private collection.

Figure 37 – Unknown master , triptych, (detail of interior wing panels). 1333. Tempera on panel.
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Figure 38 Sandro Botticelli, *Purgatory X* (detail), 1480s.
Drawing on parchment, 320 x 470 mm. Staatliche Museen, Berlin

Figure 39 Luca Signorelli, *Dante and Virgil Entering Purgatory* (detail), 1499-1502. Fresco. Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

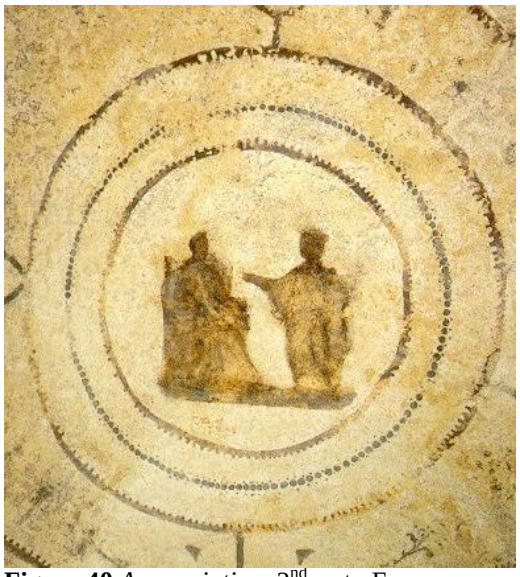

Figure 40 *Annunciation*. 2nd cent. Fresco. Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome.

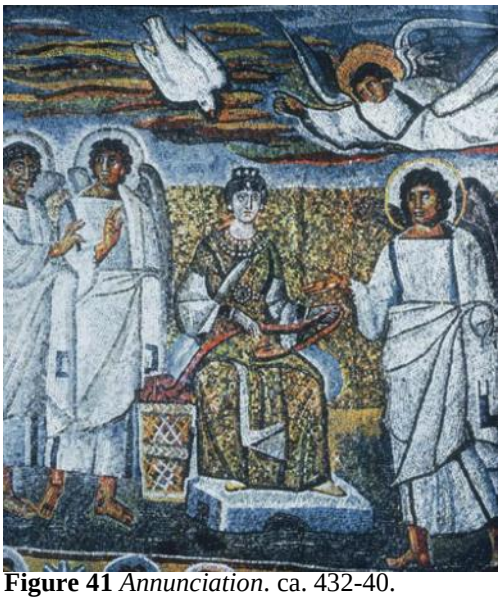

Figure 41 *Annunciation*. ca. 432-40. Mosaic. Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.

Figure 42 Pietro Cavallini. *Annunciation*, ca. 1290s. Mosaic. Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome.

Figure 43 Austrian artist, *Annunciation*, ca. 1200. Fresco. Castel Appiano, Appiano

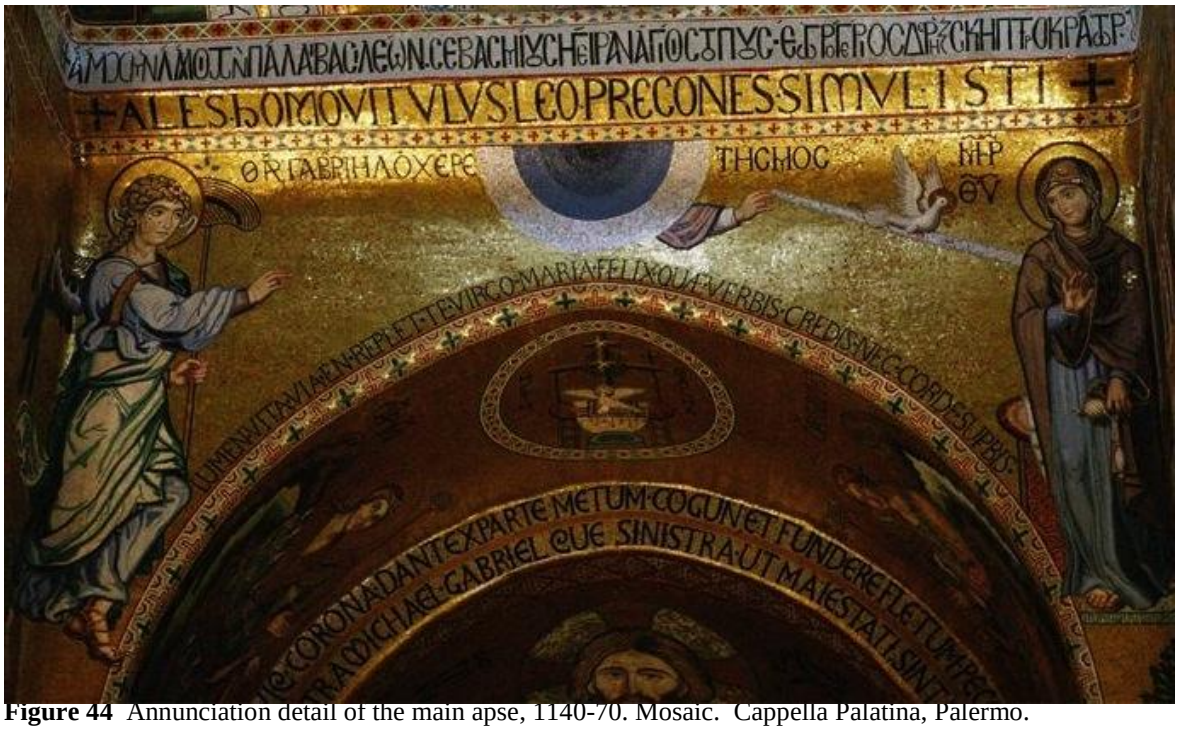

Figure 44 Annunciation detail of the main apse, 1140-70. Mosaic. Cappella Palatina, Palermo.

Figure 45 *The Annunciation*, ca.1200.
Marble. Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, France.

Figure 46 Illumination, St. Albans Psalter, fol. 3**.**
1120s. Dombibliothek, Hildensheim, Germany.

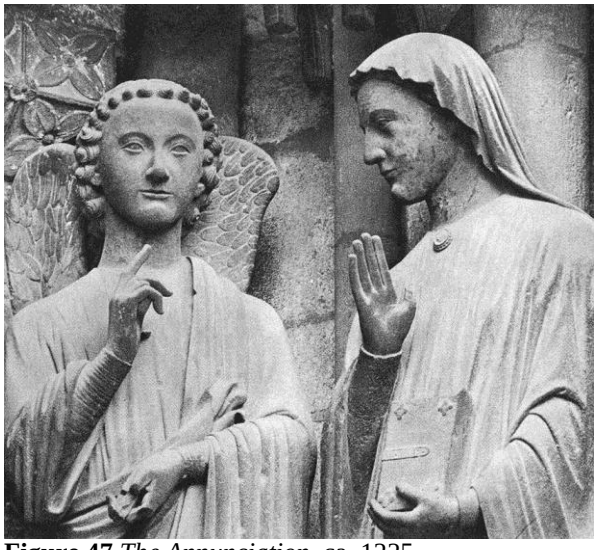

Figure 47 *The Annunciation.* ca. 1225
Marble. Cathedral, Amiens, France.

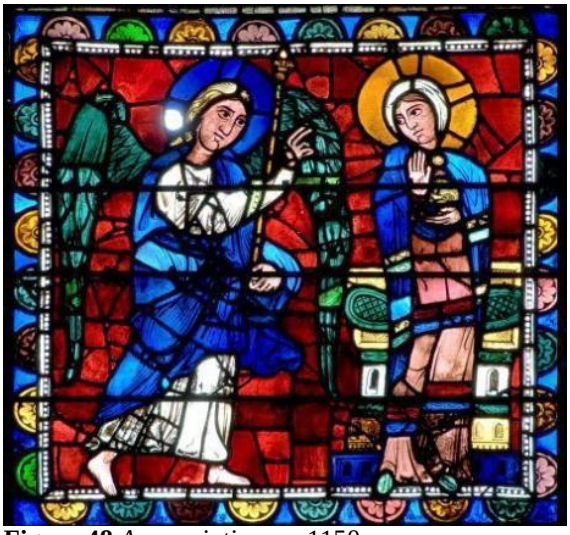

Figure 48 *Annunciation*,ca. 1150
Stained Glass. Chartres Cathedral, France.

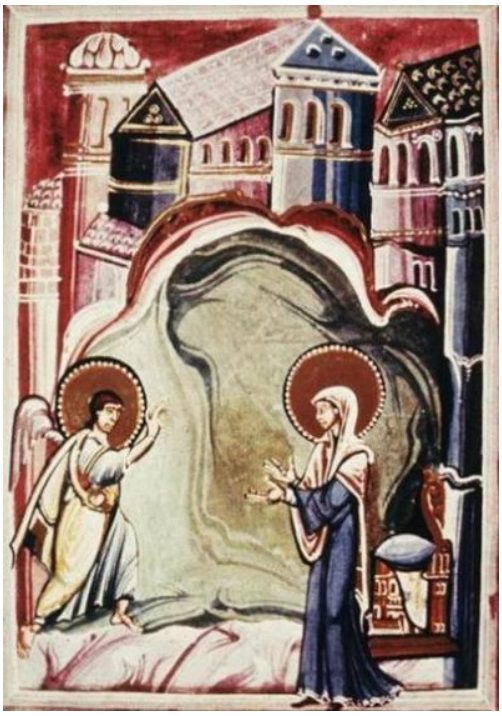

Figure 49 *Annunciation,* ca. 980-990.
Sacramentary of St. Gereon: Paris Ms.lat. 817
German manuscript illumination.
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Figure 50 *Annunciation*. Codex Egberti ms. cod. 24 fol. 9r, 10th century.
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Figure 51 *Annunciation* detail, 1181. Gilded copper.
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Figure 54 *Annunciation*, late 12th century,
Cotton MS. Caligula A.vii. Illumination.
British Library, London.

Figure 55 *Annunciation* (detail).
MS. 64, Stammheim Missal fol. 11v.
1170s. Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Figure 56 Giotto, *Annunciation*, 1306. Fresco, 150 x 195 cm. Cappella Scrovegni (Arena Chapel), Padua.

Figure 57 Giotto, *Annunciation*. 1306.
The two halves of the Annunciation have been digitally superimposed to show the unity of their mirrored imagery.

Figure 58 Giotto, *Annunciation*, 1306. Detail of Gabriel.

Figure 59 Giotto, *Annunciation*, 1306. Detail of Mary.

Figure 60 Bernardo Daddi, *Annunciation*,ca. 1335. Tempera on panel, 43 cm. x 70 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris

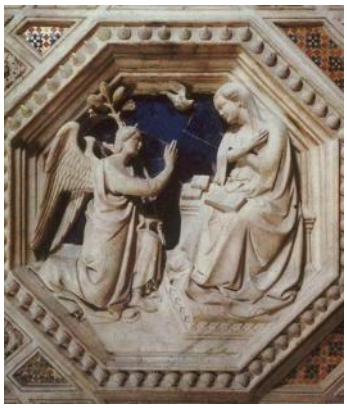

Figure 61 Orcangna, *Annunciation*, 1359. Marble on mosaic background. Tabernacle, Orsanmichele, Florence.

Figure 62
Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Annunciation*, ca. 1334. Fresco. Chapel of San Galgano at Montesiepi.

Figure 63 Duccio, *Annunciation* from the predella of the *Maestà*, 1308-1311. Tempera on panel. Opera del Duomo, Siena.

Figure 64 Simone Martini, *Annunciation*, 1333. Tempera, gold on panel. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 65 Barnaba da Siena, *Annunciation*, ca. 1340. Fresco. La Collegiata, San Gimignano.

Figure 66 Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Annunciation*, 1404-24. Gilded bronze. San Giovanni, Florence.

Figure 67 Donatello, *Cavalcanti Annunciation*, 1435. Glided pietra serena. Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence

Figure 68 Filippo Lippi, *Martelli Annunciation*, 1445. Tempera on panel. Martelli Chapel, Basilica of San Lorenzo, Florence.

Figure 69 Sandro Botticelli, *Cestello Annunciation*,. 1489. Tempera on panel. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 70 Masolino, *The Annunciation*, ca. 1423/1424. Tempera (and possibly oil glazes) on panel. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Figure 71 Fra Angelico, *Annunciation*, 1432. Tempera on panel. Santa Maria delle Grazie, San Giovanni Valdarno.

Figure 72 Fra Angelico, *Annunciation*, 1443. Fresco. Convent of San Marco, Florence.

Figure 73 Filippo Lippi, *Annunciation*,1445-1450. Tempera on panel. Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, Rome.

Figure 74 Filippo Lippi, *Annunciation*,1467-69. Fresco. Duomo, Spoleto

Figure 75 Filippo Lippi, *Annunciation*, 1450-53. Tempera on panel, 68.6 x 152.7 cm. National Gallery, London.

Figure 76 Piero della Francesca, *Annunciation*, Polyptych of Sant'Antonio, 1460-1470. Tempera on Panel. Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria Perugia.

Figure 77 Benedetto da Maiano, Altarpiece of the Annunciation (detail), before 1489. Marble. Mastrogiudici Chapel, Sant'Anna dei Lombardi, Naples.

Figure 78 Lorenzo di Credi, *Annunciation*, 1480-85. Oil on panel, 88 x 71 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 79 Sandro Botticelli, Annunciation, 1481. Detached fresco, 243 x 550 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Figure 80 Masolino, *Annunciation,* 1425-31. Fresco. Castiglione Chapel, San Clemente, Rome

Figure 81 Fra Angelico, *Annunciation* detail from the *Life of Christ cycle,* 1451-52. Tempera on panel. Museo di San Marco, Florence.

Figure 82 Domenico del Ghirlandaio Porta della Mandorla *Annunciation,* ca. 1489. Mosaic. Duomo, Florence.

Figure 83 Botticelli, *Annunciation*, predella panel, 1490-92. Tempera on wood. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 84 Fra Angelico, *Annunciation*, 1433-34.

Tempera on wood.
Museo Diocesano, Cortona.

Figure 85 Fra Angelico, *Annunciation*, 1433-34.
Detail of the conversation between Mary and Gabriel.

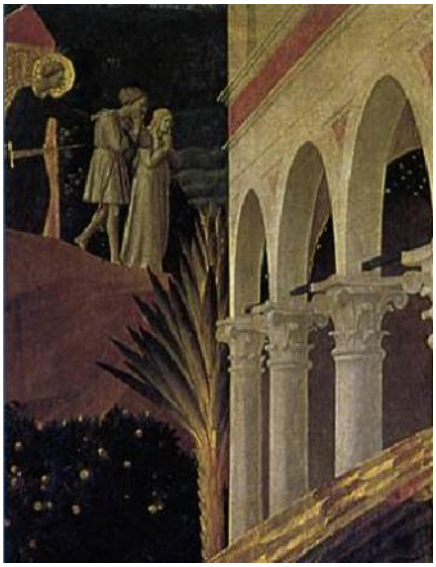

Figure 86 Fra Angelico, *Annunciation*,1433-34. Background detail showing the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden.

Figure 87 Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, 1430-32. Tempera on wood, 154 x 194 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

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Figure 88 Nicola Pisano, *Annunciation, Birth of Jesus and Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1260. Marble. Baptistery, Pisa.

Figure 89 Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Nativity*, 1308-11. Tempera on wood, 43.5 x 44.5 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Figure 90 Giotto. *Nativity: Birth of Christ*, 1304-06. Fresco, 200 x 185 cm. Cappella Scrovegni (Arena Chapel), Padua.

Figure 91 Followers of Giotto, *Nativity,* ca. 1310. Fresco. Lower Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi**.**

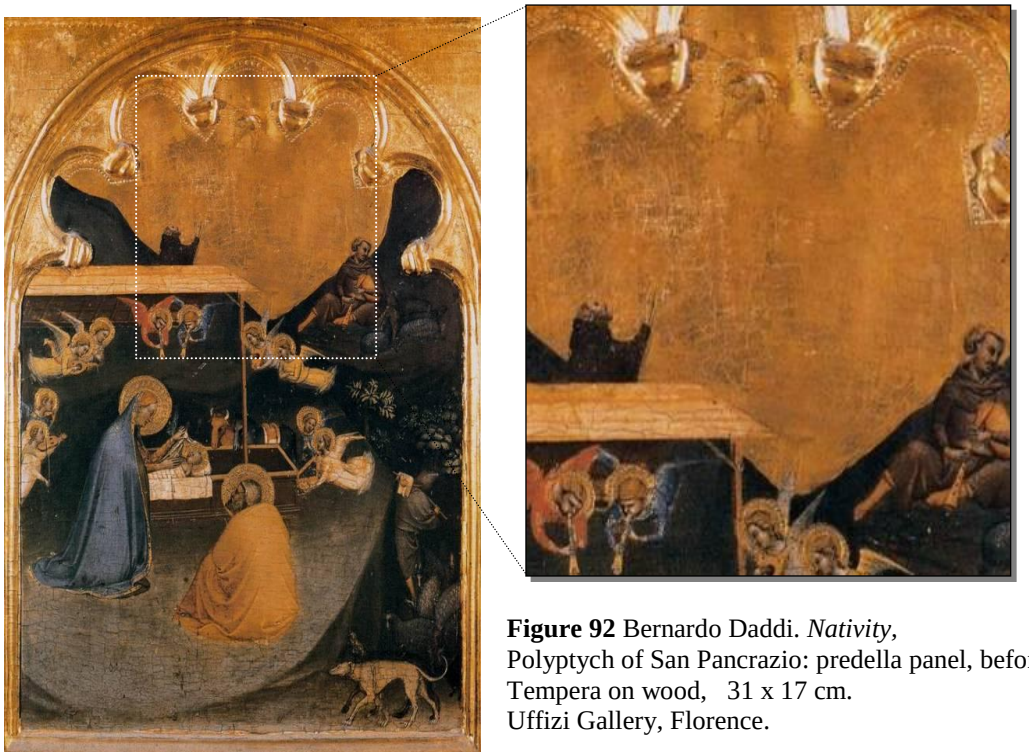

Figure 92 Bernardo Daddi. *Nativity,*
Polyptych of San Pancrazio: predella panel, before 1338.,
Tempera on wood, 31 x 17 cm.
Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 93 Lorenzo Monaco, *Nativity*, predella panel from the *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1414. Tempera and gold on panel.
Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

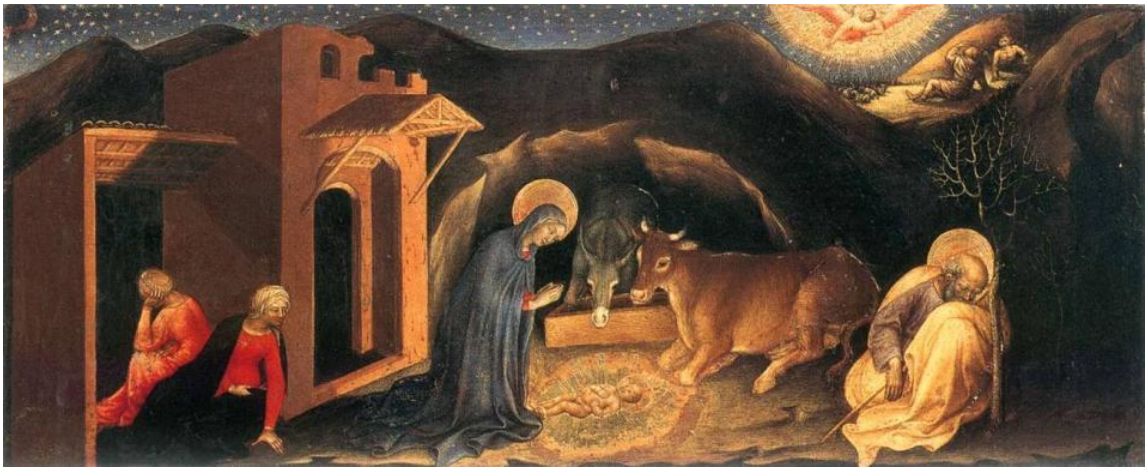

Figure 94 Gentile da Fabriano, *Nativity*, predella panel from the *Adoration of the Magi*, 1423. Tempera on wood, 32x75 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 95 Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Maestà*, 1308-1311.
This is a detail of a reconstruction of the front predella, showing the *Nativity*, the *Adoration of the Magi*, and the *Circumcision* as three unique scenes.

Figure 96 Altichiero da Verona, *Scenes from the Infancy of Christ*, 1380s.
Fresco, 123 x 123 cm.
Oratorio di San Giorgio, Padova.

Figure 97 Fra Angelico, *Scenes from the Life of Christ*, 1451-52.
Tempera on panel, 123 x 123 cm
Museo di San Marco, Florence

Figure 98 Ugolino di Prete Ilario, *Stories of the Life of the Virgin Mary*, 1370s. Fresco. Duomo, Orvieto.

Figure 99
Scenes of the Birth of Christ.
(South transept, east wall)
1140-70. Mosaic
Cappella Palatina, Palermo.

Figure 100
Scenes of the Birth of Christ.
(South transept, east and south
walls), 1140-70. Mosaic.
Cappella Palatina, Palermo.

Figure 101 *Nativity,* 1422-1440
Byzantine calendar of feast days.
MS. Gr. th. f. 1**:** fol. 002r. Illumination.
Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Figure 102 T'oros Taronac'i.
Nativity and Adoration of the Magi, 1323.
Gospel Book, fol. 15v*:* MS 6289.
Tempera on parchment.
Matenadaran Institute, Erevan, Armenia.

Figure 103 Pietro da Rimini.
The Nativity and Other Episodes from the Childhood of Christ,
ca. 1330.
Tempera on panel, 17 x 20 cm.
Fundación Colección
Thyssen-Bornemisza, Pedralbes.

Figure 104 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1483-85. Panel, 167 x 167 cm. Sassetti Chapel, Chiesa di Santa Trinita, Florence.

Figure 105 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Shepherds* (detail of Joseph's line of sight).

Figure 106 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Shepherds* (detail of the crowned Magi, passing under Pompey's arch).

Figure 107 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Shepherds* (detail of natural symbols in the foreground).

Figure 108 Gentile da Fabriano, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1423. Tempera and gold leaf on panel. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 109 Domenico Veneziano, *Adoration of the Magi*. 1440-43. Tempera on wood, diameter 84 cm. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Figure 110 Hugo Van der Goes, *Portinari Triptych***,** 1475. Oil on panel, 253×608 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 111 Hugo Van der Goes, *Portinari Triptych.* Detail of left wing panel depicting the journey to Bethlehem

Figure 112 Hugo Van der Goes, *Portinari Triptych*. Detail of center panel depicting the midwives and the Annunciation to the shepherds

Figure 113 Hugo Van der Goes, *Portinari Triptych.* Detail of right wing panel portraying the journey of the Magi.

Figure 114 Ghirlandaio? or workshop?
Adoration of the Child, after 1485.
Tempera on wood, diameter 90 cm.
Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan.

Figure 116 Detail of Shepherds, angel and horsemen.
Adoration of the Child.
Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan.

Figure 115 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, Nativity, ca. 1492.
Tempera on panel, 85 x 63 cm.
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Figure 117 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Magi,* 1488. Tempera on wood, 285 x 240 cm. Spedale degli Innocenti, Florence.

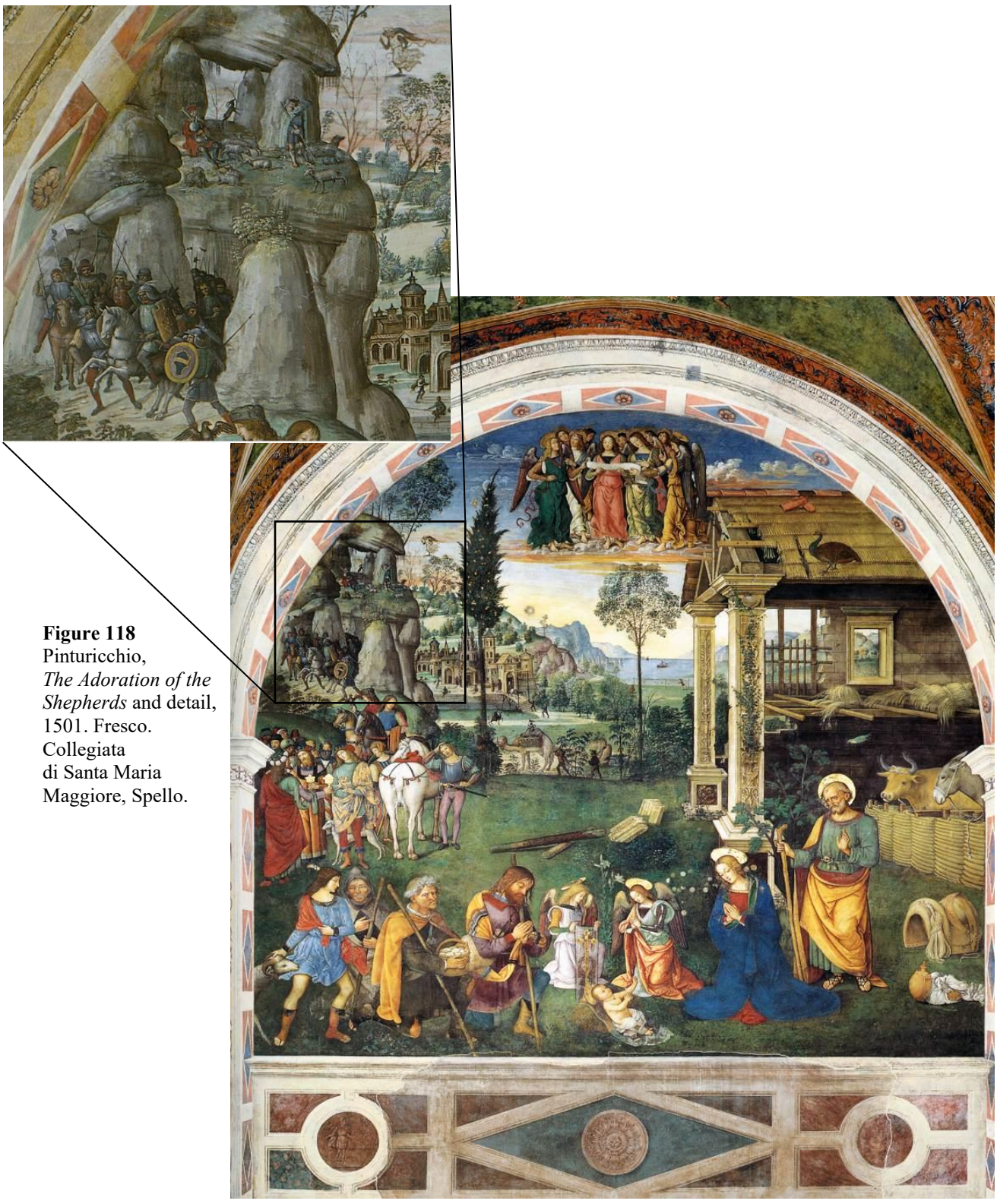

Figure 118
Pinturicchio,
The Adoration of the Shepherds and detail,
1501. Fresco.
Collegiata
di Santa Maria
Maggiore, Spello.

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Figure 119 Leonardo da Vinci,
Studies of cats and a dragon, ca. 1513.
Pen and ink, 27x21cm.
Windsor Castle, Royal Library. 12363.

Figure 120 Leonardo da Vinci, *Lady with an Ermine*, 1483-90. Oil on wood, 55 x 40 cm.
Czartoryski Museum, Cracow.

Figure 121 Leonardo da Vinci, *La Gioconda*, 1503-05. Oil on canvas, 77 x 53cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Figure 122 Leonardo da Vinci, *Benois Madonna*, 1478. Oil on canvas (transferred from panel). The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

Figure 123 Leonardo da Vinci, *Madonna of the Carnation*, 1478–1480. Oil on canvas, .62 cm x 48 cm. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Figure 124 Leonardo da Vinci, *Madonna and St. Anne*, ca. 1503. Oil on wood, 168 cm × 112 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

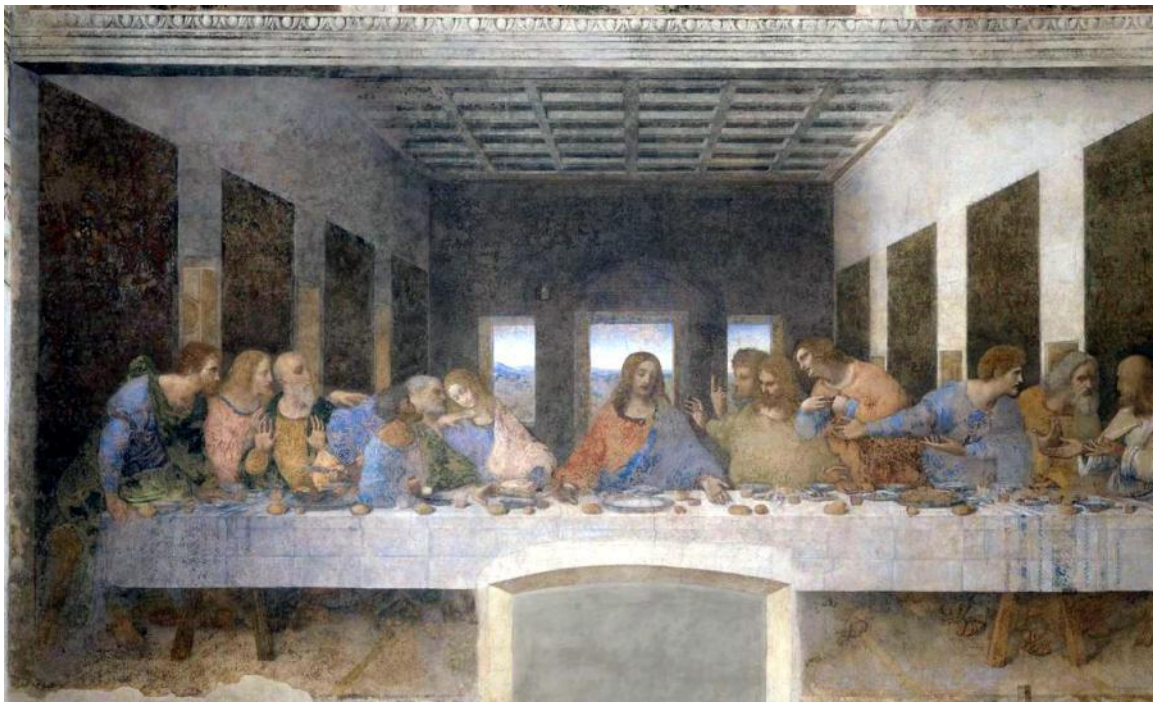

Figure 125 Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, 1498. Tempera on gesso, pitch and mastic, 460 x 880 cm. Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan.

Figure 126 Pietro Giovanni da Birago, Engraving of Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, ca. 1500.

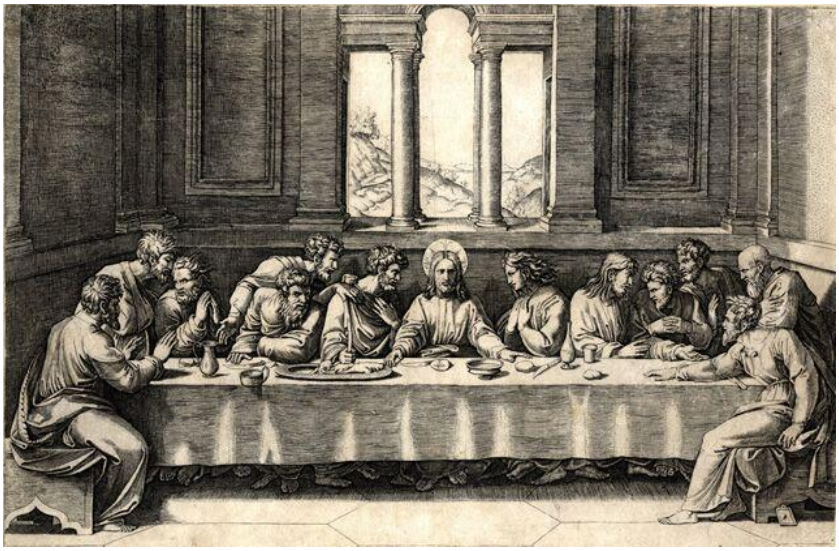

Figure 127 Marcantonio Raimondi, Leonardo's Last Supper after a design by Raffaello, ca. 1515-16. Engraving. The Victoria and Alberti Museum, London.

Figure 128 Pieter Soutman , after Peter Paul Rubens, 17th century. Etching. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

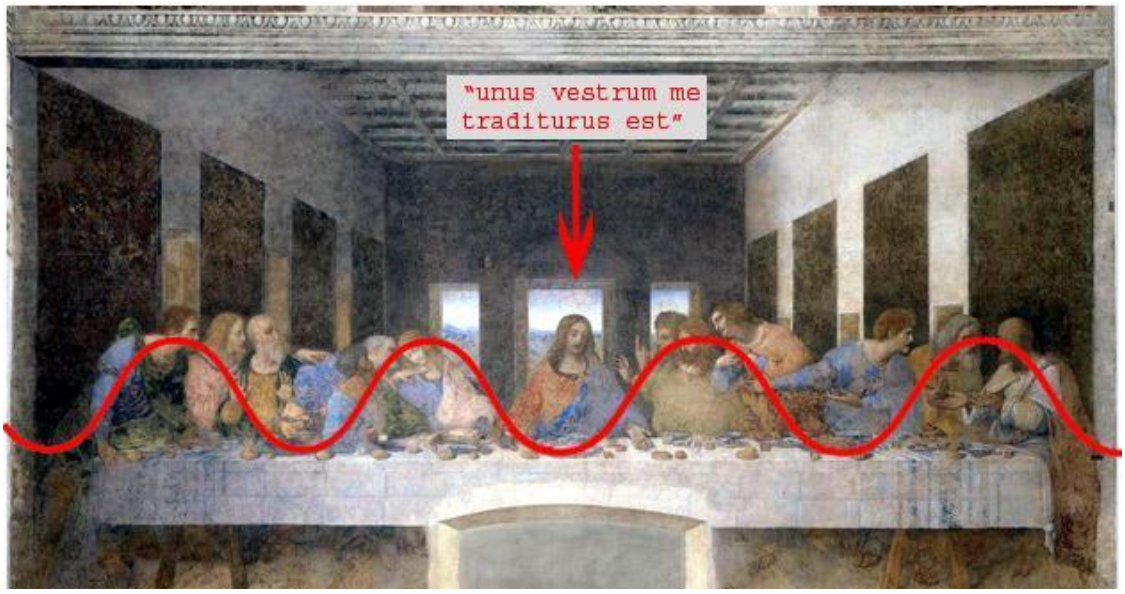

Figure 129 The author's interpretation of Martin Kemp's idea of the ripple effect, with the point of impact located at the center of the composition with Christ announcing the betrayal.

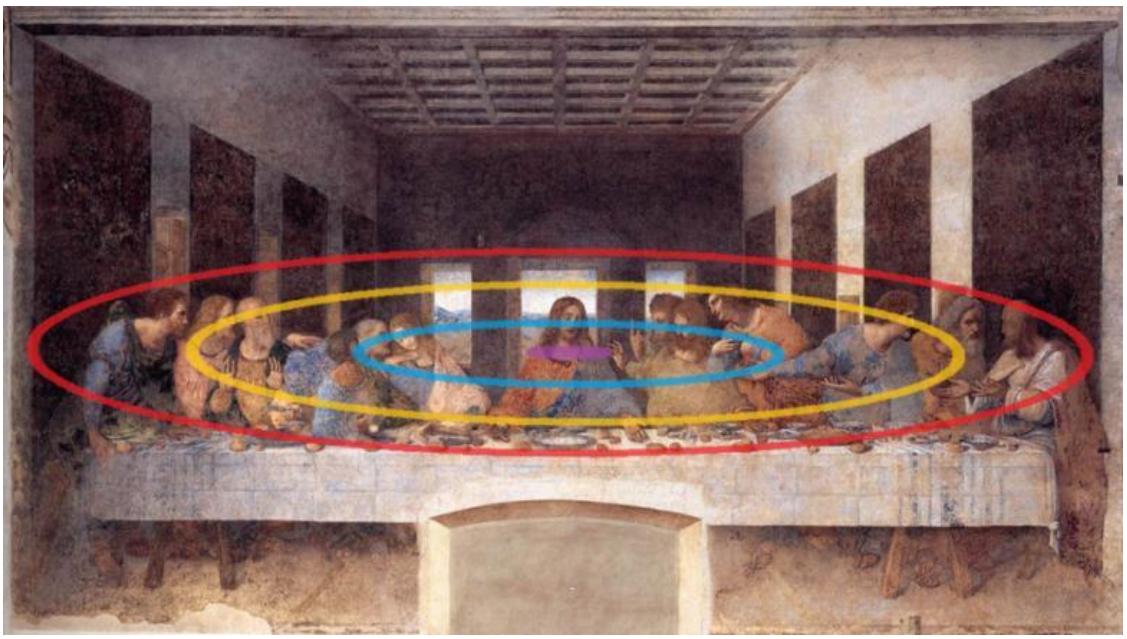

Figure 130 The author's interpretation of the sound wave effect, each ring representing a verse.

Figure 131 Leonardo da Vinci,
Study of the movement of water, (detail), 1507-9. Pen and ink.
Windsor, Royal Library, 12660v.

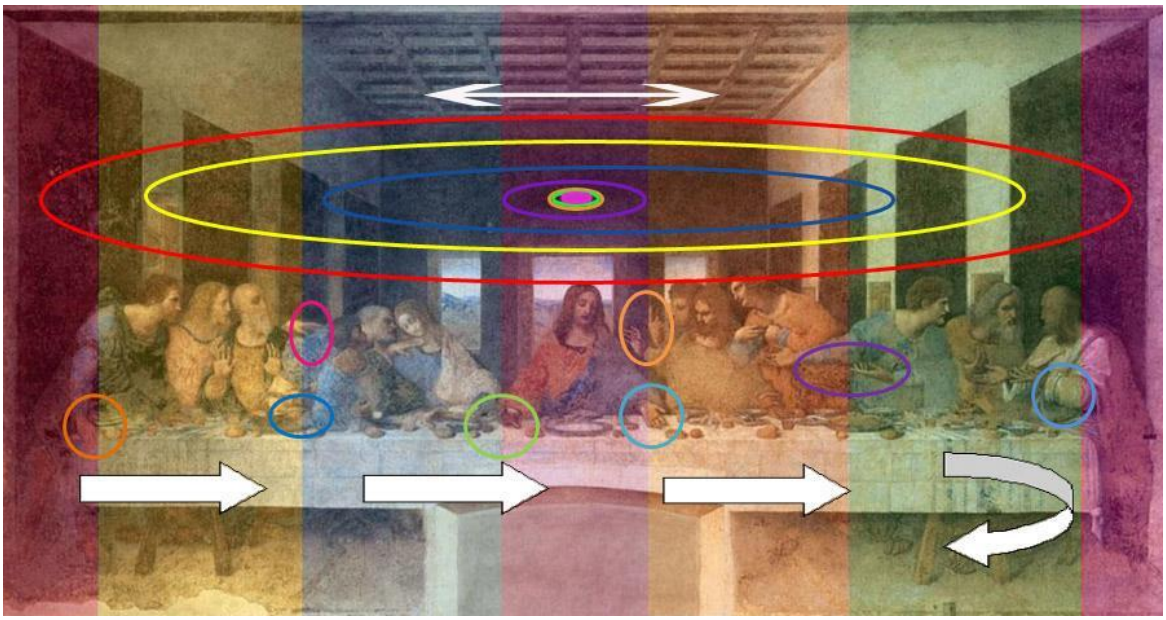

Figure 132 Diagram to illustrate the concentric circles that indicate how the stiumulus of the action emanates from the center and moving outward in all directions, across the frames and out toward the viewer. The panning motion indicated by the arrows should move left to right, as the text. As the eye encounters each frame it intersects the appropriate verse, completing the narrative reading order. Reaching the end the hands of the apostles redirect the eye back to the center. The small rings are limbs that intersect between the frames and perform the function of splicing the frames together.

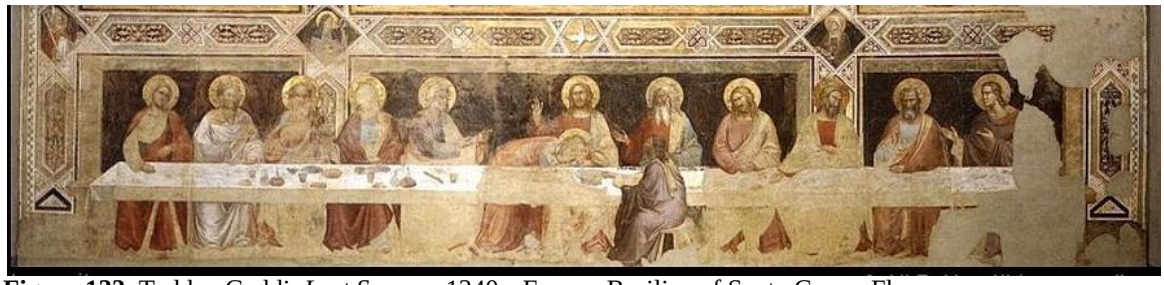

Figure 133 Taddeo Gaddi, *Last Supper*, 1340s. Fresco. Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence.

Figure 134 Andrea del Castagno, *Last Supper*, 1450. Fresco. Sant'Apollonia, Florence.

Figure 135 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Last Supper*, 1480. Fresco. Ognissanti Church, Florence.

Figure 136 Leonardo da Vinci. *Study for the Last Supper*, c. 1494. Red chalk on paper. Accademia di Venezia (n. 254)

Figure 137 Duccio, *Last Supper*, 1280. Tempera on panel. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena.

Figure 138 Orcanga, *Last Supper* (fragment), ca. 1365. Fresco. Refectory of Santo Spirito, Florence.

Figure 139 Lippo Memmi? Barna of Siena? *Last Supper*, early 14th c. Fresco. Collegiata di San Gimignano.

Figure 140 *Study for the Last Supper*, detail of two apostles labeled Simon and Phillip. The Apostle Thaddeus, or Jude, was clearly modeled on this figure from the Venice study.

Figure 141 Digital reconfiguration of Leonardo's study for the Last Supper to show the extension of the table.

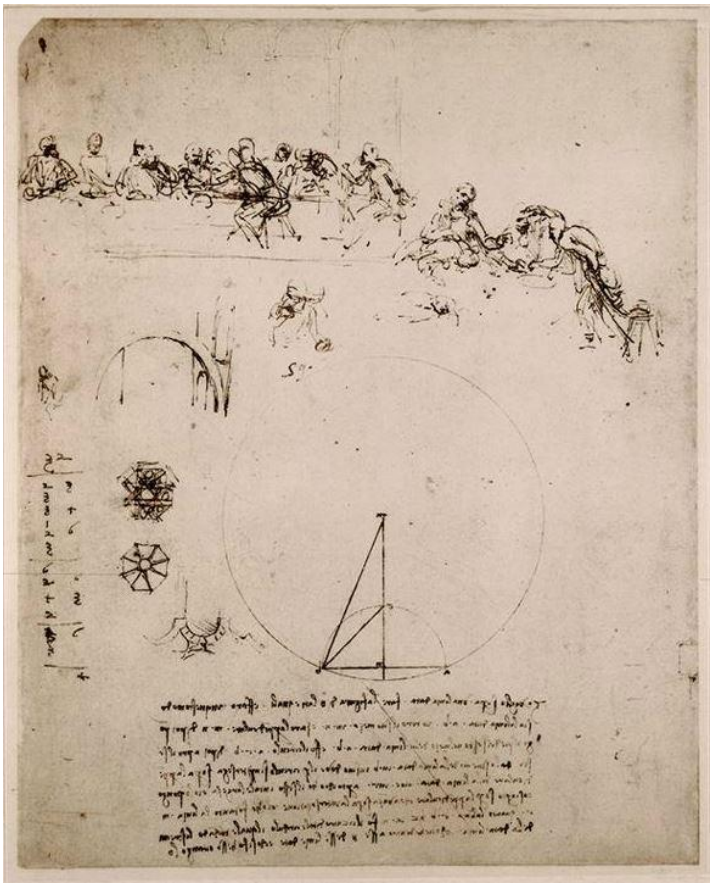

Figure 142 Leonardo da Vinci, *Study for the composition of the Last Supper*, ca. 1494. Ink drawing, 26.6 x 21.4 cm. Royal Library, Windsor (RL 12542).

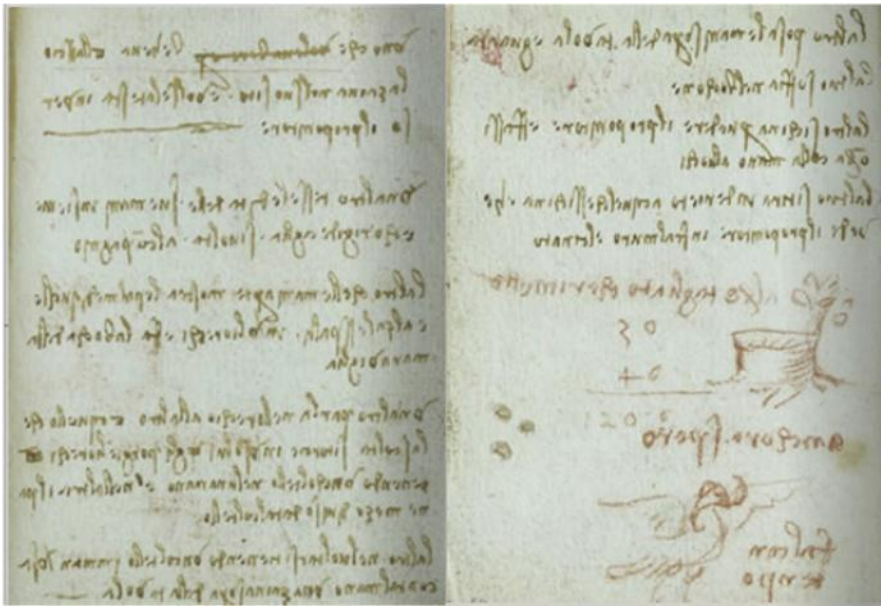

Figure 143 Leonardo da Vinci, Forster Codex ff. 62v and 63r. Annotations describing the Last Supper apostles. Victoria and Albert, London.

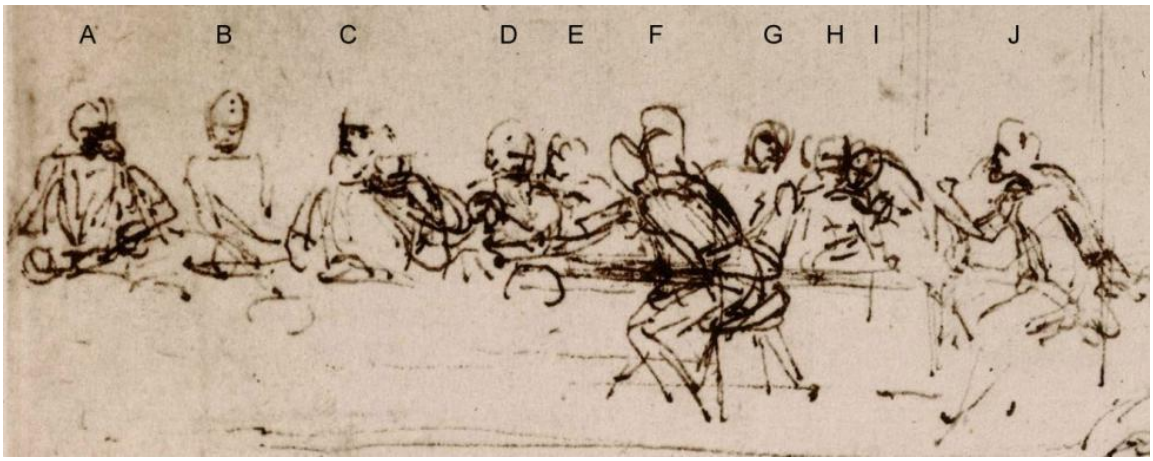

Figure 144 Leonardo da Vinci. Windsor study detail. The apostles have been labeled for ease of identification.

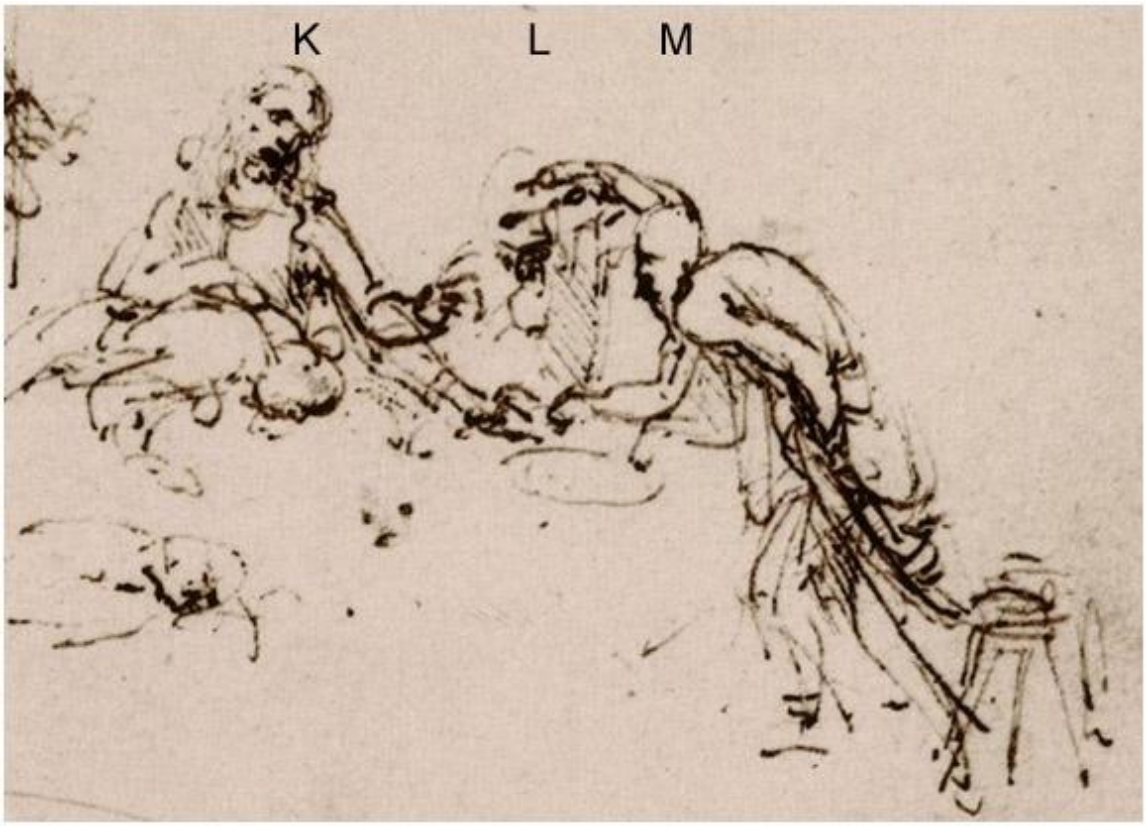

Figure 145 Leonardo da Vinci. Windsor study detail of Christ, John, Peter and Judas group. The apostles have been labeled for ease of identification.

Figure 146 Windsor sketch detail (figure C). The Apostle rests his right forearm on the table and holds a cup at mouth height, in the left.

Figure 147 Windsor sketch detail (figures D & E). The figure on the left holds his hands together, perhaps clasped, at chest height, and he turns to listen to his companion who appears to be whispering to him.

Figure 148 Windsor sketch detail (figure A) The bowl-like cup in the lower left corner has just been upset by the right hand/forearm of the apostle. The back of the right hand rests near the table and from it protrudes a long black blade. He is perhaps holding a loaf of bread in the left hand.

Figure 149 Windsor sketch detail (isolated figure N).

Figure 150 Windsor sketch detail (K, L, M) The figure at the center of the group (L), possibly Peter (at Jesus' left, since John is on the left), clearly shades his eyes with his left hand, while the right possibly grips a knife. Leonardo was obviously experimenting with the hand positions of both Christ (K) and Judas (L). The hands might be actively reaching for the plate together, or Judas may be receiving the dipped sop from Christ. The rapid sketch suggests animation.

Figure 151 Windsor sketch detail (G, H, I).

The figure in the center (H) holds his elbows close to the body, but his open mitten-like palms face the viewer. The head appears to have sketched upright, and then subsequently Leonardo opted to have him pull to his left, away from Judas who sits before him (but also to provide a line of sight to figure I behind him).

Figure I (merely suggested with a line to delineate the contour of his back, shoulder and the top of his head) is standing to the right of H, but leans over behind him to talk to G. Figure G, leans back in order to facilitate their conversation.

Figure 152 Andrea del Castagno, *Last Supper (detail)*, 1450. Fresco. Sant'Apollonia, Florence.

Figure 153 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Last Supper (detail)*, 1489. Fresco. San Marco, Florence.

Figure 154 Taddeo Gaddi, *Last Supper (detail)*, 1340s. Fresco. Santa Croce, Florence.

Figure 155 Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Last Supper*, 1476. Fresco. Badia a Passignano, Passignano.

Figure 156 Perugino, *Last Supper*, 1493-96. Fresco. Cenacolo di Fuligno, Florence.

Figure 157 Cosimo Rosselli, *Last Supper*, 1482. Fresco. Sistine Chapel, Vatican.

Figure 158 Leonardo, *Last Supper*, detail of the Apostles Bartholomew, James Minor and Andrew

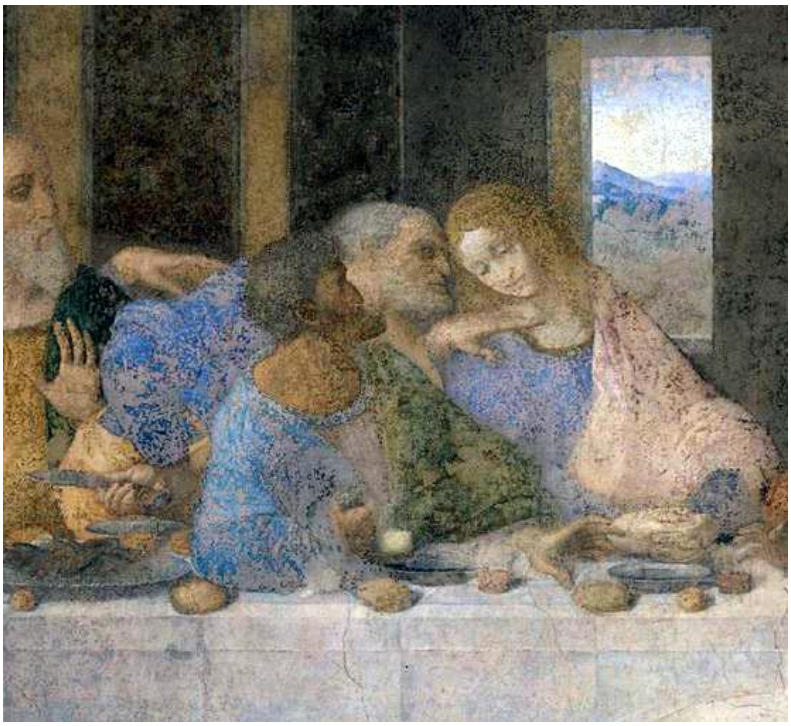

Figure 159 Leonardo, *Last Supper*, detail of the Apostles Peter, Judas and John

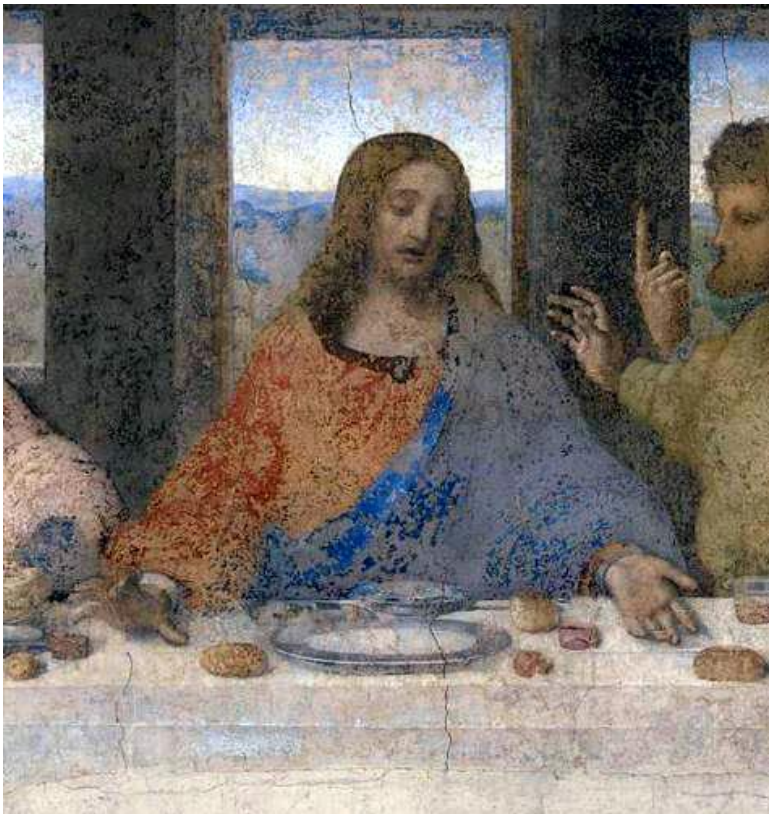

Figure 160 Leonardo, *Last Supper*, detail of Christ

Figure 161 Leonardo, *Last Supper*, detail of the Apostles Thomas, James Major and Phillip

Figure 162 The raised finger of destiny/ divine plan as it appears in other works by Leonardo: *The Adoration of the Magi* (1481, Uffizi, Florence); *Madonna and St. Anne Cartoon* (c. 1500, National Gallery, London); *St. John the Baptist* (1513-16, Louvre, Paris)

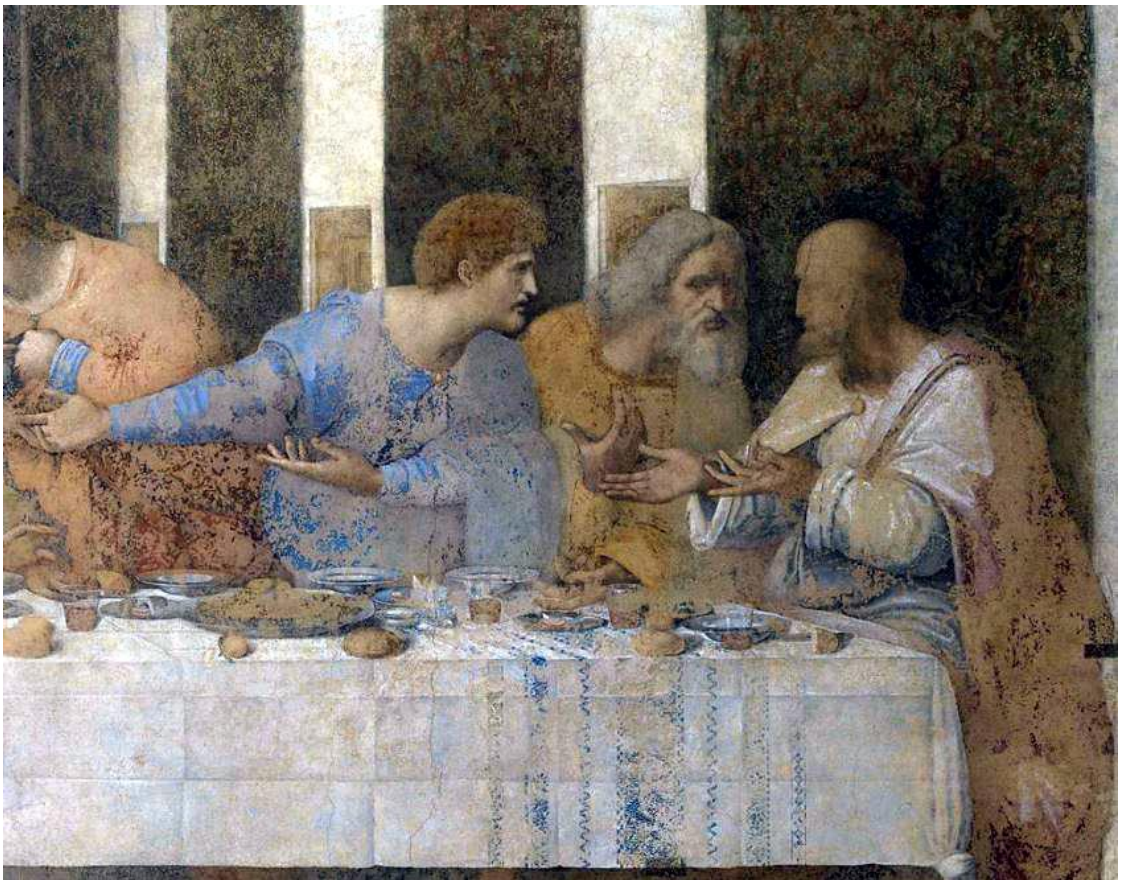

Figure 163 Leonardo, *Last Supper*, detail of the Apostles Matthew, Thaddeus (Jude) and Simon.

Figure 164 Leonardo, *Last Supper*, detail of the placement of the hands

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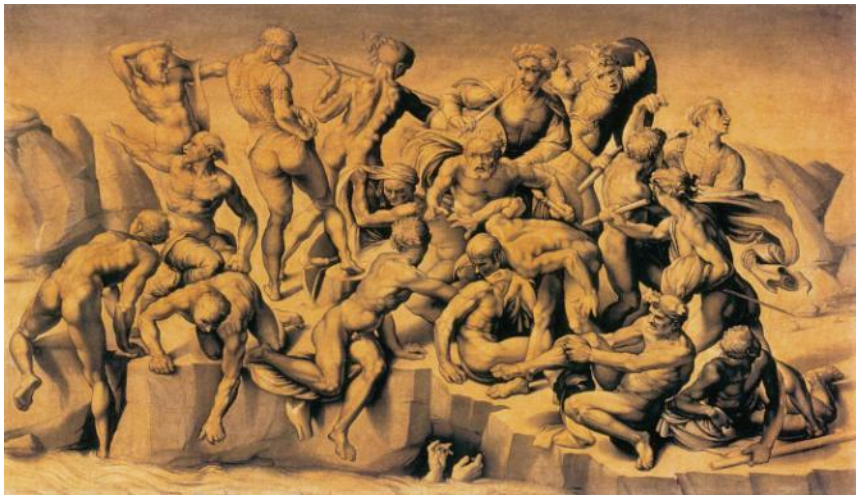

Figure 165

Aristotile da Sangallo,
The Battle of Cascina,
ca. 1542.
(copy after Michelangelo's original cartoon).
Oil on panel.
Holkham Hall. Norfolk. England.

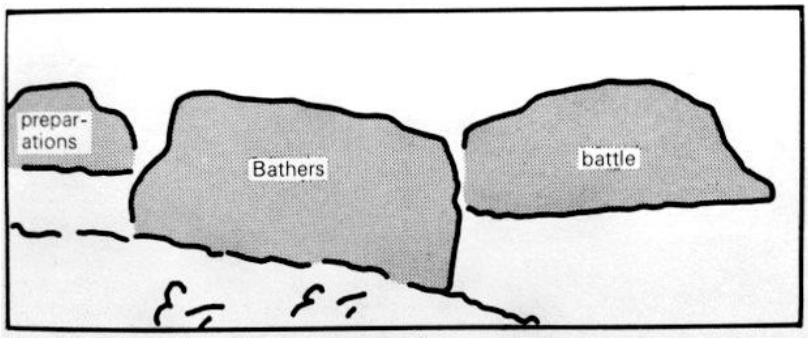

Figure 166 Cecil Gould's proposed reconstruction of the layout of Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina.* The layout proposes a composition similar to that of *The Deluge* with various groupings of figures set throughout the pictorial space.

Figure 167
Michelangelo,
The Deluge,
ca. 1508.
Fresco. Sistine Chapel,
Vatican City.

Figure 168 Michelangelo, *A Combat between a Cavalryman and Six Infantrymen*. ca. 1504. Pen and ink on paper. 17.9 x 25.1 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England. (WA1846.40).

Figure 169 *The Battle of Cascina*, detail of old man struggling to pull on his clothes. Surrounding details have been masked.

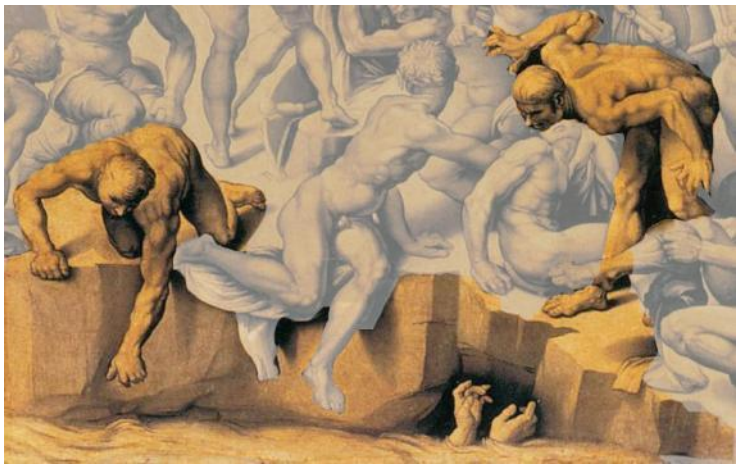

Figure 170 *The Battle of Cascina*, detail of the drowning man, the man on the bank frozen with fear, and the man reaching toward the water. Surrounding details have been masked.

Figure 171 Michelangelo, *Doni Tondo,* ca. 1506-08. Tempera on panel. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 172 Giorgione, *Holy Family*, ca. 1500. Oil on panel. 37.3 x 45.6 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 173 Luca Signorelli, *Holy Family*, ca. 1484-90. Oil on wood, 124 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Figure 174
Michelangelo, *Taddei Tondo,* ca. 1504-1505. Marble, 106.8cm.
Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Figure 175 Michelangelo, *Taddei Tondo,* detail of left oblique angle.

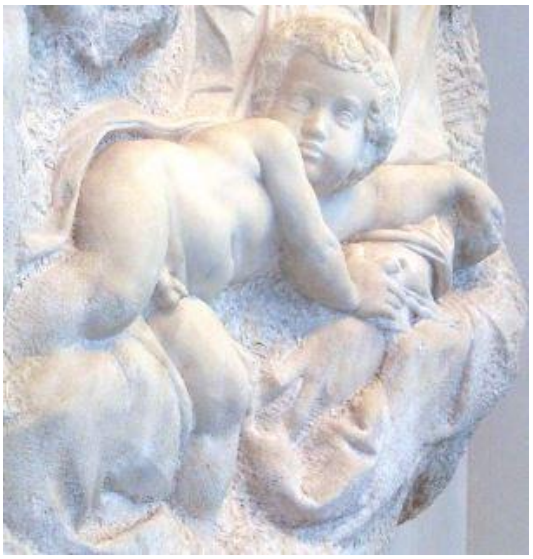

Figure 176 Michelangelo, *Taddei Tondo,* detail of left oblique angle.

Figure 177 Michelangelo, *Taddei Tondo,* detail of right oblique angle**.**

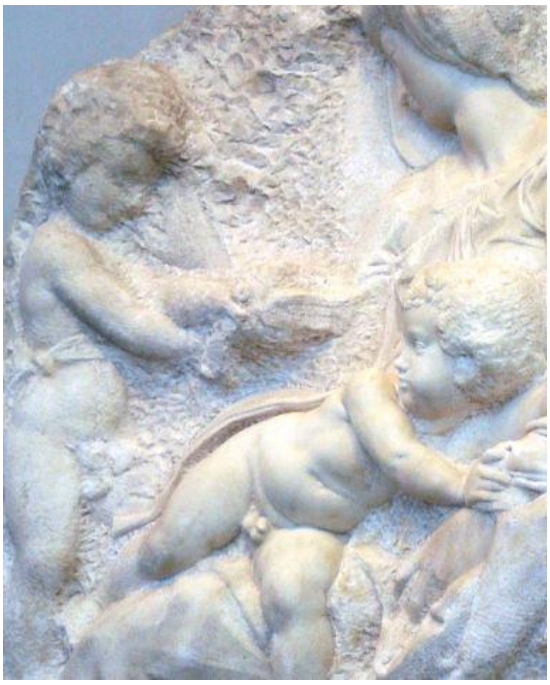

Figure 178 Michelangelo, *Taddei Tondo,* detail of right oblique angle**.**

Figure 179 Michelangelo, *Pitti Tondo,* ca. 1504-08. Marble. 85×82 cm. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

Figure 180 Maarten van Heemskerck, Drawing of Bacchus in the sculpture garden of Jacopo Galli, ca. 1533–6.

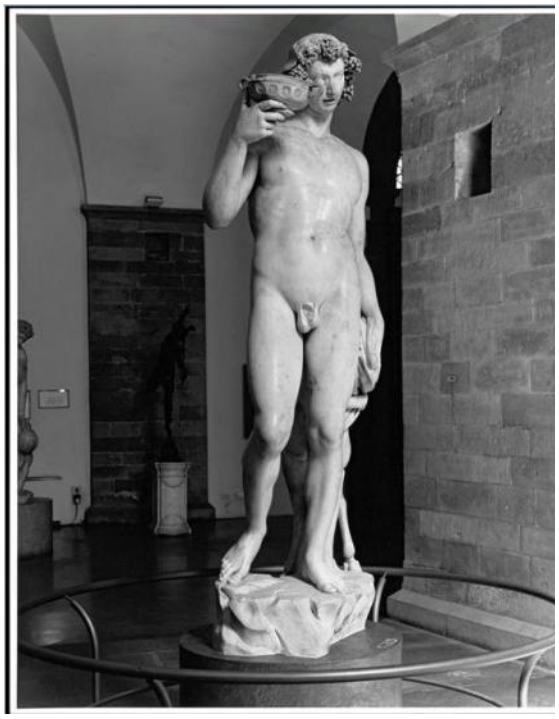

Figure 181 Michelangelo, *Bacchus*, 1497. Marble. 203cm.
Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

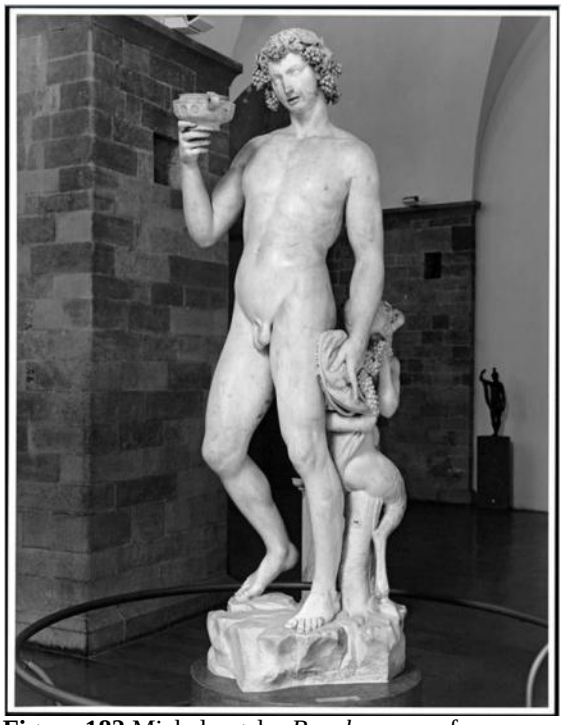

Figure 182 Michelangelo, *Bacchus*, seen from roughly 45 degrees left of center

Figure 183 Michelangelo, *Bacchus*, left profile

Figure 184 Michelangelo, *Bacchus*, 135 degrees

Figure 185 Michelangelo, *Bacchus*,180 degrees

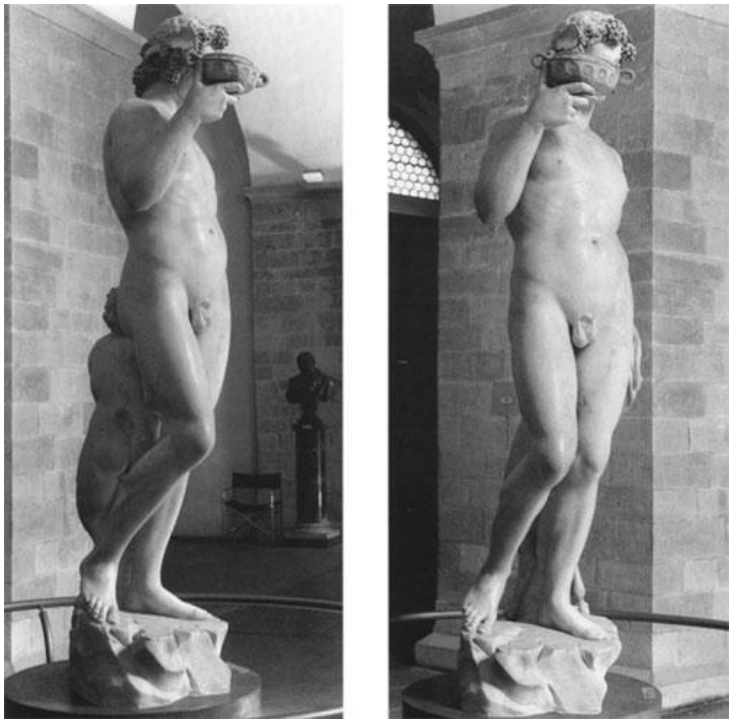

Figure 186 Michelangelo, *Bacchus* – right side views.

Note how the cup hides the face from these angles. The posture is relaxed but more or less stable and upright.

Figure 187
Bacchus, detail of the lively and grotesque expressionism of the face. The teeth and tongue are visible between the parted lips.

Figure 188 Full frontal view comparison of *Bacchus* and the *Campana Dionysus*, Marble. 163.cm. Roman copy from a Greek original, 2nd century. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg

Figure 189 *Bacchus* and *Campana Dionysus*, seen from a roughly 70 degree oblique angle view.

Figure 190 Andrea del Verrocchio, *David*, ca. 1468. Bronze. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

Figure 191 Donatello, *David*, 1409. Marble. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

Figure 192 Donatello, *David*, ca. 1438. Bronze. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

Figure 193 Donatello, *David* (detail), ca. 1438. Bronze. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

Figure 194 Various angles of approach for viewing David upon entering the Signoria Square. The red arrows are the north-west entrance from via dei Calzaiuoli/via Calimaruzza, the blue arrow is the northern entrance from via delle Farine, the green arrow is the south-western entrance from via Vaccherecia, and the yellow arrow is the southern entrance from the Arno river.

Figure 195 Approaching from the north and northwest of the piazza, from the Duomo, one sees *David* from an oblique angle. There is a strong vertical line formed by the weight bearing leg.

Figure 196 The heroic, frontal view is seen by approaching from the west.

Figure 197 From the south, from the direction of the river, the spectator approaches *David* from the direction of his attention.

Figure 198 Michelangelo, *David,* 1501-1504. Marble, 4.34 m., 5.17m. including the pedestal. Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.
This image shows the visitor's obligatory frontal approach toward the statue.

Figure 199 *David,* frontal approach detail**.**

Figure 200 Seen from ground level at a standard distance (20-30 feet) from the statue, the expression of David remains fairly the consistent: determined, concentrated, watchful

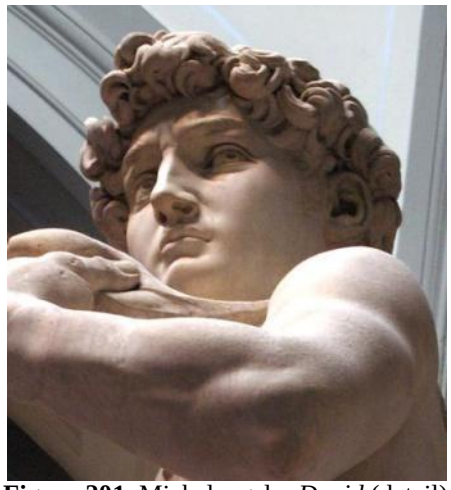

Figure 201 Michelangelo, *David* (detail) Seen from a closer vantage point, beneath the elbow.

Figure 202 Michelangelo, *David*. Detail of the stone held loosely in David's powerful right hand.

Figure 203 Michelangelo, *David.* Detail of David's right hand and the veins that run up through the arm to the neck.

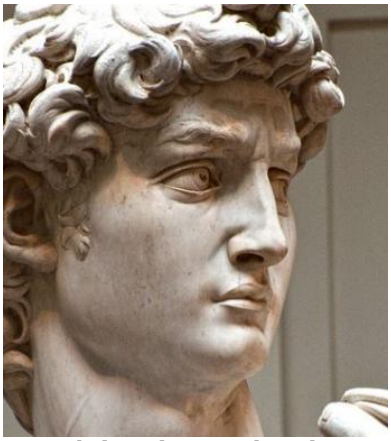

Figure 204 Michelangelo, *David*. A closer and more eye-level vantage point highlights the worry expressed in the furrowed brow, the flare of the nostrils, the large eyes and small mouth. Here the vein in the neck is visible.

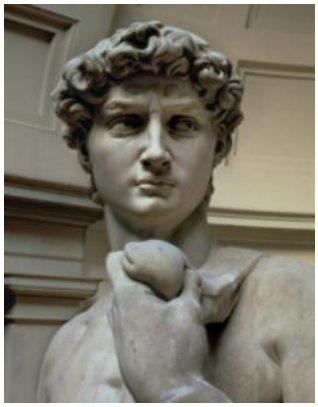

Figure 205 More eye level vantage points and different lighting, change David's expression even more dramatically. The image to the left appears wary, while on the right, David seen in full light appears almost frightened.

Figure 206 Michelangelo, New Sacristy (Medici Chapel), 1520-1533. San Lorenzo, Florence.

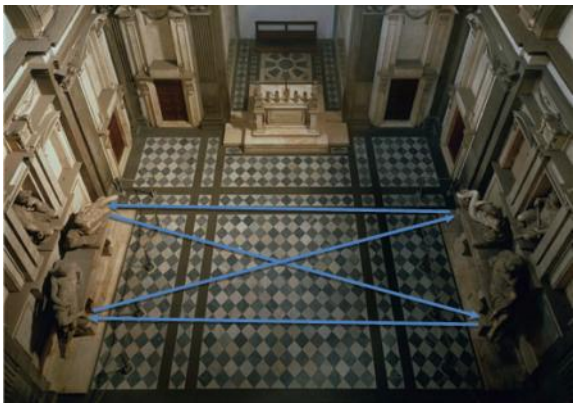

Figure 207 Michelangelo's New Sacristy (1520-1533) seen from above. The arrows indicate the cyclical pattern to trace the four times of day chronologically. From *Dawn* in the upper left to *Day* in the lower right, across to *Dusk* in the lower left, across transversally to *Night*, returning straight across to *Dawn*.

Figure 208 Michelangelo, *Dusk* and *Dawn* (detail of the tomb of Lorenzo Duke of Urbino), 1520-1533. Marble. Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence.

Figure 209 Michelangelo, *Night* and *Day* (detail of the tomb of Giuliano Duke of Nemours), 1520-1533. Marble. Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence.

Figure 210 Michelangelo, New Sacristy, detail of the alternating light and dark architectural details, which mimic the repetition of night and day.

Figure 211 Michelangelo, New Sacristy, detail of the friezes of grotesque masks.

Figure 212 Michelangelo, *Giuliano de'Medici, Duke of Nemours,* 1520-1533. Marble. Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence.

Figure 213 Michelangelo, *Lorenzo de'Medici, Duke of Urbino,* 1520-1533. Marble. Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence.

Figure 214 Michelangelo, *Medici Madonna;* Giovannangelo Montorsoli, *St. Cosmas* (right), Raffaello da Montelupo, *St Damian* (left), Tomb of Lorenzo and Giuliano (*i magnifici*), New Sacristy, Basilica di San Lorenzo, Florence.

Figure 215
Michelangelo,
Last Judgment,
1537-1541.
Fresco,
13.7 x 12.2 m.
Sistine Chapel,
Vatican City.

Figure 216 Coppo di Marcovaldo?
Last Judgment, Late 13th cent.
Mosaic. San Giovanni, Florence.

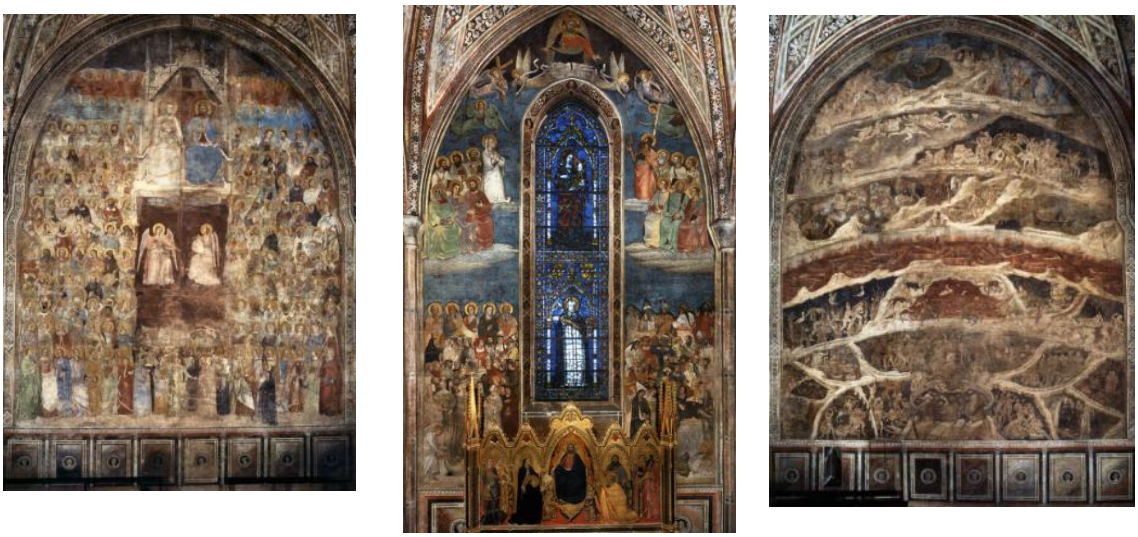

Figure 217 Nardo and Andrea di Cione (Orcagna), Strozzi Chapel, 1350s. Fresco.
Santa Maria Novella, Florence. South wall, *Heaven* (right), west wall, *Last Judgment*, North wall, *Hell*.

Figure 218 Fra Angelico, *Last Judgment*, c. 1431. Tempera on panel, 105 x 210 cm. Museo di San Marco, Florence.

Figure 219 Fra Angelico, *Last Judgment*, detail of Heaven.

Figure 220 Fra Angelico, *Last Judgment*, detail of Hell.

Figure 221 Giotto, *Last Judgment*, 1305. Fresco, 10 x 8.40 m, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua.

Figure 222 Luca Signorelli, *Last Judgment*, 1499-1502. Fresco. Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

Figure 223 Luca Signorelli, *Resurrection of the Flesh*, 1499-1502. Fresco. Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

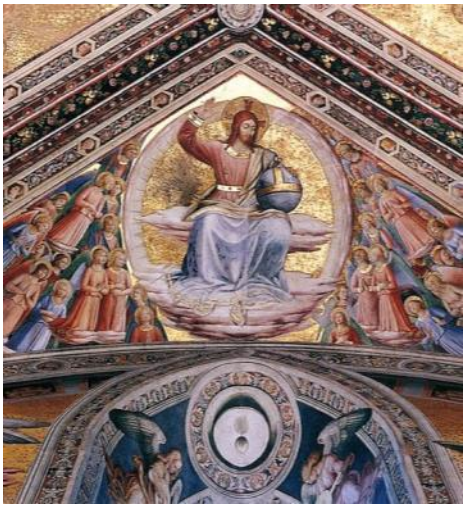

Figure 224 Fra Angelico, *Christ as Judge*, 1447. Fresco. Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

Figure 225 Luca Signorelli, detail of *The Elect*, 1499-1502. Fresco.
Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

Figure 226 Luca Signorelli, detail of *The Damned*, 1499-1502. Fresco.
Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

Figure 227 Fra Angelico, *The Last Judgment* Triptych (detail), ca. 1450. Tempera on panel.
Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Figure 228 Fra Angelico, *Last Judgment* detail, Armadio degli, 1451-52. Tempera on panel.
Museo di San Marco, Florence.

Figure 229 Michelangelo, detail of trumpeting angels, *Last Judgment*, 1537-1541.
Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.

Figure 230 Luca Signorelli, detail of *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, 1499-1502. Fresco.
Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

Figure 231 Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, detail of the Resurrection of the Dead.

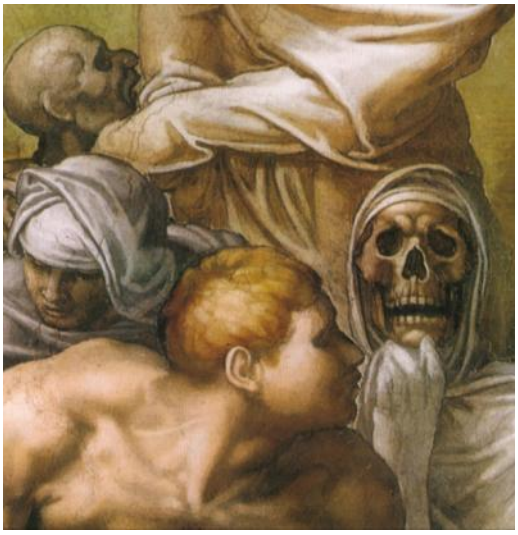

Figure 232 Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, detail of the Resurrection of the Dead.

Figure 233 Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, detail of the Ascent of the Elect.

Figure 234 Michelangelo, *Last Judgment* detail of the Ascent of the Elect.

Figure 235 Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, detail of the Dispute over the Souls.

Figure 236 Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, detail of the Damned.

Figure 237 Luca Signorelli, detail of *the Descent of the Damned*, 1499-1502. Fresco.
Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto.

Figure 238 Michelangelo, *Last Judgment* detail of the Angels denying ascent to the Damned.

Figure 239 Giotto, detail of *Last Judgment,* 1305. Fresco. Scrovegni Chapel, Padua

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